



House of Representatives
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

TO: All House Members

DATE: December 27, 2010

FROM: Representative Mario Scavello

SUBJECT: **Assisted Outpatient Treatment** (AOT) legislation (Former HB 2186)

I am reintroducing **House Bill 2186**, amending the Mental Health Procedures Act (1976 Act 143). The legislative intent of 1976 was to ensure that persons with the most severe forms of mental illness had a way get court ordered treatment either in hospitals or in the community. The proposed legislation would provide a way to realize that intent through **Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT)**. It would provide care in the community to the most ill, making use of existing services and programs. As a result, those who are least aware of their illness would NOT be excluded from receiving services already available to others in Pennsylvania.

The standard used for commitment under the current Mental Health Procedures Act is whether the person poses a “clear and present” danger to self or others. Unfortunately, in most cases, by the time an individual with severe and untreated mental illness (i.e., schizophrenia or bipolar disorder) meets this tough standard, inpatient treatment (hospitalization, but even more often, incarceration) is necessitated by the presenting dire circumstances. This legislation **slightly modifies the outpatient standard** so that persons who are most at risk for homelessness, arrest, incarceration, or death due to their untreated mental illness can, in fact, receive treatment in the community. Impaired awareness of illness (a neurological symptom known as anosognosia) is the main reason why individuals with severe mental illness do not take their medication and do not recognize their need for treatment.

The purpose of AOT is to provide treatment before harm or violence occurs and without unnecessarily institutionalizing individuals with severe mental illness. While the

This legislation is supported by NAMI Pennsylvania, NAMI PA Affiliates – Berks, Cambria, Dauphin, Lehigh Valley, Main Line and York, The Sheriffs' Association of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the Newtown Township Police Benevolent Association, and the Treatment Advocacy Center. In addition, the bill has received support from several newspapers through editorials from the Philadelphia Inquirer, the Patriot Newspaper, the Daily Review, the Pocono Record, the Scranton Times, and the York Daily Record.

If you would like to cosponsor this legislation, please contact Kendra in my Harrisburg office by e-mailing ksnuffer@pahousegop.com or 787-7732.

Previous co-sponsors: SCAVELLO , BAKER , D. COSTA, DeLUCA , GINGRICH , GODSHALL , GOODMAN, HENNESSEY , KNOWLES, KOTIK , LONGIETTI , MILLARD , OBERLANDER, O'NEILL , ROSS , SIPTROTH , SWANGER , VULAKOVICH , WHEATLEY , YOUNGBLOOD , DENLINGER , HORNAMAN , SANTARSIERO and BRIGGS.