

On the morning of February 22, 2022, my son, 36-year-old Black man with schizoaffective disorder, experienced a crisis. He went to the lobby of his Silver Spring apartment building and began to harass and menace people in the lobby. He had no weapon but aggressively approached the front-desk security officer in a manner that caused her to flee her station and seek help from the property manager. The property manager called the police for a wellness check; they both knew my son and knew that such aggression was highly unusual for him. The property manager also called me. My wife and I, who live five minutes away, rushed to the scene.

When we arrived, we found at least four police cars in front of the apartment building. We spoke with the property manager and security officer who confirmed that no one had been physically harmed, that they were concerned about my son's aberrant behavior, and that he had retreated to his third-floor apartment by the time the police arrived.

Upstairs we found my son on the floor by the elevator, highly agitated and angry, handcuffed and surrounded by several police officers who, we were told, were trying to get him to go to the hospital for evaluation. We confirmed that he had a mental illness. The sergeant at the scene told us that he was also under arrest for assaulting an officer. We spoke to that officer, who assured us that she was unhurt and unfazed. We later learned that these were CIT-trained officers.

My son was successfully transported to Holy Cross Hospital, where he was not admitted after evaluation and taken into custody. At a bond hearing the next day, we learned that he was being charged with assaulting *three* officers at the scene. No one at the apartment building had pressed any charges. He was released on bond. At a later preliminary hearing, we learned that even if my son plead guilty to these charges the county would be demanding jail time.

At his bench trial in May 2023, we learned that the police officers had knocked on his apartment door when they heard him inside talking loudly and incoherently. When they opened the unlocked door, he screamed at them to "leave [him] the f\*ck alone" and approached them in the hallway. At that point, one officer pointed a TASER at him. The commotion drew onlookers from nearby apartments who called loudly for the police to leave him alone because he wasn't well. (This became the basis for an additional charge of disturbing the peace.) After a brief standoff with two officers in the hall—he was agitated but made no aggressive moves—a third rushed upon him without warning to handcuff him. That is when my son took a wild swing, contacting one officer in the shoulder and another (the one we had spoken to) in the face. The third injured a finger tackling my son to the floor. The three officers testified at trial that they had followed the protocols of their CIT training.

The judge found my son guilty of three counts of assaulting a police officer and one count of disturbing the peace and sentenced him to three concurrent sentences of 20 years. The prison time was suspended pending three years of supervised probation. When asked for comment before sentencing, my son rose in court and said, "Your honor, I did not commit a crime until the police arrived."

Had this been a non-police intervention, my son would have been released from the hospital 23 months ago and allowed to continue his life under the care of his therapeutic support team. Instead, he lives under the threat that any illness-induced transgression could result in prolonged incarceration. I therefore favor a Mobile Crisis Outreach Team response to episodes such as the one my son experienced and vehemently oppose Bill 43-23.

Dennis Williams, Silver Spring