

Dear Montgomery County Councilmember,

I would like to state my opposition to Bill 43-23. Here are some of my reasons:

I have an adult daughter who has been diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia since 2008. Over the years I have used the services of the police several times when my daughter was in crisis.

The police officers who came to our house for crisis calls often had contradictory ideas about their roles as responders. For example, a couple of the officers were physically rough with my daughter and treated her as though she is a violent criminal (she is not at all violent,) some officers acted uncomfortable that they had been called for a mental health crisis, some officers stated that they do not provide hospital transport or fill out paperwork while others said they do provide those services, and so on. The main take-away is that these police officers were armed and primarily focused on apprehending and subduing criminals, and that my daughter did not get services she needed.

By contrast, our experience calling a Montgomery County Mobile Crisis Outreach Teams (MCOT) in 2022 was entirely different and had a much better outcome! The team of two (a man and a woman - clinician and peer counsellor) arrived at our house and greeted my daughter in a cordial and friendly manner. They sat down with her as equals around a table in our back yard, allowing her to feel more comfortable than with a stand-up confrontation. They talked to her for quite a while in an unhurried fashion, performed an assessment, and determine that she would benefit from a visit to the hospital for further evaluation. They also filled out the paperwork required for the hospital visit and included their assessment. In addition, they took the time to listen to my own concerns, gave me a card with their contact information, and encouraged me to call them if I had more to discuss.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote NO on bill 43-23, and to continue to build up the MCOT system as the best way to respond to those on mental health crises.

Thank you reading my comments,

Georgine Prokopik