

**Proponent Testimony on House Bill 61  
House Civil Justice Committee  
Laura Garguilo, LISW  
Probate Prescreener, Netcare Access  
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Chairman Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide additional proponent testimony on House Bill 61, legislation to include forensic evaluators, providers of probate evaluations, and regional psychiatric hospital employees as individuals whose residential and familial information is exempt from disclosure under the Public Records Law.

My name is Laura Garguilo, LISW, and I am a Probate Prescreener for Netcare Access. I'm here today to address the proposed legislation as well as to share relevant personal narratives to demonstrate why this is so important to me. My job as a Probate Prescreener is to work with individuals who have acute mental illness and to assess for imminent and grave danger. If I assess that an individual poses a risk to themselves or another due to mental illness, it is my job to write an Affidavit of Mental Illness, which is filed with the Probate Court of Franklin County, and this Affidavit has our full names and credentials spelled out. This Affidavit is given to the individual once the individual is served by Franklin County Sheriffs Deputies. Our names can also be found on any medical records that are released to any of our clients.

There have been countless times that my life has been threatened by people who are acutely mentally ill, when I am making decisions as to whether or not they are going to be admitted to a psychiatric facility. As recently as two weeks ago, someone was videotaping me and trying to obtain my license plate number. As recently as one week ago, I went to assess an individual with psychosis, and access to many firearms. I went alone, unarmed, and without police, as we routinely do in the scope of our professional responsibilities. I met with him and he was in need of psychiatric stabilization, so when I left the home, I went to my office and wrote an Affidavit with my full name on it. He will have this paperwork forever once he is served. That means that at any time he can search for me and find me, should he so choose. In speaking of the two examples above, I by no means mean to imply that individuals with acute mental health diagnoses are always dangerous. However, certain people with mental illness lack the insight into the severity of their symptoms, and thus cannot present voluntarily to an inpatient psychiatric facility. Sometimes these people present with a high risk of harm toward self and others. I am making decisions that result in those individuals temporarily losing their civil liberties, and sometimes those individuals believe that we are acting against them- not trying to help them.

The people we work with are in need of more services, not fewer. This Bill is a sensible way to protect the safety of the professionals who are trying to keep the public safe, as well. In order to qualify for an interview to work in the positions we do, an applicant must have many years of experience in the mental health field. These professionals have cultural competence, trauma-

informed care experience, and strong diagnostic skills. If qualified professionals do not have the type of protection this Bill provides as an incentive to remain in the field, they may leave the field to protect their own safety. Subsequently, the public will lose the peace of mind that their loved ones, friends, neighbors, and strangers, will get the best mental health care possible.

I recognize and accept the inherent risks taken when working to evaluate individuals who, as a result of mental illness, may pose a threat to the safety of themselves or others. What I will not understand or accept is why my home address would be available to such individuals, exposing my spouse and child to risk. If people want to file a complaint and are unhappy with my having made a decision to have them hospitalized, they can contact the CSWMFT Board and contact me at work; no one needs to come and find me at my house.

Thank you, and thank you to Primary Sponsors: Representatives Lanese and Liston and their staff for their work on this measure. Thank you also to the Cosponsor Representatives and their staff: Representatives Brown, Carfagna (my representative), Crawley, Leland, Patterson, Riedel, Roemer, Ryan, Scherer, and West. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.