

Proponent Testimony on House Bill 41
Civil Justice Committee
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Chairman Hillyer, Vice Chair Grendell, Ranking Member Galonski, and members of the committee: thank you for the opportunity to discuss House Bill 41, and thank you to Representatives Lanese and Liston for their work on this bill.

My name is Emily Holley. I am a licensed independent social worker and a Probate Pre-screener at Netcare Access. My job is to evaluate residents of Franklin County suspected to be living with mental illness who pose an imminent risk of harm to themselves or others. If these individuals do meet the aforementioned criteria, I submit an affidavit to the Probate Court asking that the individual's right to refuse treatment be temporarily suspended so the individual can receive psychiatric evaluation. My full name and professional licensure go on this paperwork and a copy is provided to the client. The choice I make to pursue a probate order is understandably not a choice most of my clients agree with. While not all of the clients I work with have a history of violence, some do. Some have made attempts to or have succeeded in seriously harming community members or other mental health professionals. I take many steps to protect myself in the community when working with my clients but I have a reasonable expectation of feeling safe when I return home at the end of the day.

My concern is the overwhelming availability of my personal information via public data mining websites. In 2019, while preparing to testify on this issue, my co-workers and I ran our names through several popular data mining sites. Most of these websites were able to attach my birth date, home address, and family members to my profile. Any of my clients can access this information with a basic internet connection. The vast number of these sites makes it nearly impossible to keep up with checking for and removing my data. I have requested my information be removed from no less than 15 of these sites but as long as this information is considered public record, these sites will repopulate my data no matter how many times I request it be removed. I understand there are certain risks inherent to my job but this should not be one of them when it is so easily rectified.

To provide a real-life example of the concerns I face in my work: several years ago, I submitted a probate affidavit for a client who was stalking young women in the community. The client had a known history of violence when he was not compliant with medications. As I was part of the client's target population, I was able to take certain precautions in my investigation such as not meeting face-to-face. However, my name still went on his affidavit when I filed with the court. When I checked public court records about a year later, I found the client was facing new charges of harassment, menacing by stalking, and violating a protection order.

I respect a client's right to disagree with my clinical decisions. When I meet with a client, I always make my identity and employer clear. A client may call my employer and ask for me, for my direct supervisor, or our agency's Client's Rights Officer. A client may also contact my licensing board. There is no reason for a client to have my home address or personal phone number if they want to contact me regarding a work matter. I should not be put in a position of having to weigh the risk of my safety or my family's safety against the fulfillment I receive from providing this important and necessary service for the benefit of the community. I ask the committee to please vote yes on this bill and take an additional step to protect those of us that work with this population.