

Proposal to aid patients stalled in committee

Posted by [TBN Editor](#) On 03/09/2016



To the Editor:

As of this letter [received March 9], House Bill 885 (Creation and Maintenance of Mental Health Professional Profiles aka The Patient Protection Provider Information Act) is awaiting a vote in the Health and Government Operations Committee in the Maryland House of Delegates. The bill had a hearing in this committee on February 23. Unlike West Virginia, committee members do not vote immediately after a bill has a hearing.

It is not uncommon for a committee chairman to stuff a bill in a drawer (keep it from being put to a vote by the committee members). Another strategy is to wait until the last few weeks of legislative session and then vote on the bill. In this scenario, it is highly unlikely any bill could get through the entire process in both chambers before the end of session, essentially killing the bill.

HB 885 sponsored by Delegate David Vogt and brought to the legislature by mental health advocate Heather Sinclair, would place the already public disciplinary records of mental health providers on an easily accessible and searchable database. I support this bill as I believe the public has the right to know the disciplinary backgrounds of their providers. Wouldn't you agree?

Unfortunately, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has opposed this bill. One must wonder why this agency does not want the public to be better informed when choosing their mental health provider. Could it be they do not want the truth exposed? Perhaps they do not want the public to know that mental health providers are sexually exploiting their patients; that they are forging the signatures of legal guardians on a minor's mental health treatment plan. Perhaps they do not want it known that professionals are giving their child's prescribed medication to their patient. Of course, these professionals never faced criminal prosecution and were allowed to surrender their license.

I have spoken with the staff of Chairman Peter Hammen and have been told this bill is not even on their radar, which basically means the bill is being held.

Unless this bill passes out of committee for a full vote on the floor of the House, your delegate has no voice on this issue unless he or she sits on that committee. I urge you to contact Chairman Hammen's office at 410-841-3772 or via email at peter.hammen@house.state.md.us and respectfully ask him to put HB885 up for a committee vote and to ask for a favorable vote on this bill so that the public can easily research the disciplinary backgrounds of their mental health provider.

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