

# **NAMI Orange County**

*The Community's Voice on Mental Illness*

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The Honorable Tom Umberg  
State Capitol Building,  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Support AB 2357

Dear Assemblyman Umberg,

Representing the 600 members of NAMI Orange County, I ask you to please support AB 2357, which is jointly authored by Assemblyman Yee, and Assemblywoman Karnette. AB 2357 extends the sunset to 2013 on AB 1421 (Thomson - 2002) the Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) Demonstration Project.

Laura's Law (AB 1421) was enacted in 2002. It allows individual counties to establish demonstration programs for consistent and mandated outpatient treatment for those with a serious mental illness who are incapacitated by the symptoms of their illness. Prescribed criteria to be met include that the individual is suffering from a serious mental illness, that there has been a clinical determination that the individual is unlikely to survive safely in the community without supervision, and the individual is not able to cooperate and/or complete their treatment plan.

Support for Laura's Law was stated by 63 of a total of 67 Orange County family members, professionals, and consumers who testified at the Orange County Mental Health Board Hearings on AOT of AB 1421 in 2004. Many of these 63 California citizens expressed the need for AOT in Orange County to be used to stop the revolving door of repeated hospitalizations and incarcerations by giving wrap around transition services at release from hospital treatment or custody.

One of the main reasons that Orange County has not adopted Laura's Law is because they are hesitant to establish a program that may terminate by law in two years, and that deprives Laura's Law, a program modeled after the proven effective AOT program in New York known as Kendra's Law, a chance to prove itself (which it will once in place). Recovery from mental illnesses requires a supportive structure and AOT provides structure and support.

Your Aye vote is respectfully requested. Passage of this bill will bring treatment to those in the counties of California whose lives have been destroyed by untreated illness.

Sincerely,

Janice DeLoof, NAMI Orange County Board of Directors, Co-Chair Legislation