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SENATE BILL NO. 335

Offered January 9, 2008

Prefiled January 8, 2008

A *BILL to amend and reenact § 37.2-814 of the Code of Virginia, relating to voluntary outpatient treatment.*

Patron—Cuccinelli

Referred to Committee for Courts of Justice

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That § 37.2-814 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:**

§ 37.2-814. Commitment hearing for involuntary admission; written explanation; right to counsel; rights of petitioner.

A. The commitment hearing for involuntary admission shall be held within 48 hours of the execution of the temporary detention order as provided for in § 37.2-809; however, if the 48-hour period herein specified terminates on a Saturday, Sunday, legal holiday, or day on which the court is lawfully closed, the person may be detained, as herein provided, until the next day that is not a Saturday, Sunday, legal holiday, or day on which the court is lawfully closed.

B. At the commencement of the commitment hearing, the district court judge or special justice shall inform the person whose involuntary admission is being sought of his right to apply for voluntary admission and treatment as provided for in § 37.2-805, *or for outpatient treatment*, and shall afford the person an opportunity for voluntary admission. The judge or special justice shall ascertain if the person is then willing and capable of seeking *voluntary outpatient treatment or* voluntary inpatient admission and treatment. *Prior to permitting the person to voluntarily accept outpatient treatment, the judge or special justice shall ascertain from the community services board or behavioral health authority that (i) treatment and appropriate services for the person's condition are available in the community, (ii) treatment and service providers have agreed to provide the treatment or other services identified as appropriate for the person, and (iii) the person has sufficient capacity to understand and adhere to the provisions of the treatment plan and signs an agreement with the community services board, behavioral health authority, or other service provider agreeing to abide by the provisions of the proposed treatment plan for a period of no less than 30 days. Such agreement may be used as evidence at any subsequent commitment hearing.* If the judge or special justice finds that the person is capable and willingly accepts voluntary inpatient admission and treatment, ~~the judge or special justice shall require him to the person shall enter into an agreement with the inpatient treatment provider to accept voluntary admission for a minimum period of treatment not to exceed 72 hours, and such agreement may be used as evidence at any subsequent commitment hearing. After~~ *The person shall also agree that after such minimum period of treatment, the person shall give the hospital treatment provider 48 hours' notice prior to leaving the hospital facility.* During this notice period, the person shall not be discharged except as provided in § 37.2-837, 37.2-838, or 37.2-840. The person shall be subject to the transportation provisions as provided in § 37.2-829 and the requirement for preadmission screening by a community services board or behavioral health authority as provided in § 37.2-805.

C. If a person is incapable of accepting or unwilling to accept voluntary admission and treatment, the judge or special justice shall inform the person of his right to a commitment hearing and right to counsel. The judge or special justice shall ascertain if the person whose admission is sought is represented by counsel, and, if he is not represented by counsel, the judge or special justice shall appoint an attorney to represent him. However, if the person requests an opportunity to employ counsel, the judge or special justice shall give him a reasonable opportunity to employ counsel at his own expense.

D. A written explanation of the involuntary admission process and the statutory protections associated with the process shall be given to the person, and its contents shall be explained by an attorney prior to the commitment hearing. The written explanation shall describe, at a minimum, the person's rights to (i) retain private counsel or be represented by a court-appointed attorney, (ii) present any defenses including independent evaluation and expert testimony or the testimony of other witnesses, (iii) be present during the hearing and testify, (iv) appeal any order for involuntary admission to the circuit court, and (v) have a jury trial on appeal. The judge or special justice shall ascertain whether the person whose involuntary admission is sought has been given the written explanation required herein.

E. To the extent possible, during or before the commitment hearing, the attorney for the person whose involuntary admission is sought shall interview his client, the petitioner, the examiner described

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59 in § 37.2-815, the community services board or behavioral health authority staff, and any other material
60 witnesses. He also shall examine all relevant diagnostic and other reports, present evidence and
61 witnesses, if any, on his client's behalf, and otherwise actively represent his client in the proceedings. A
62 health care provider shall disclose or make available all such reports, treatment information, and records
63 concerning his client to the attorney, upon request. The role of the attorney shall be to represent the
64 wishes of his client, to the extent possible.

65 F. The petitioner shall be given adequate notice of the place, date, and time of the commitment
66 hearing. The petitioner shall be entitled to retain counsel at his own expense, to be present during the
67 hearing, and to testify and present evidence. The petitioner shall be encouraged but shall not be required
68 to testify at the hearing, and the person whose involuntary admission is sought shall not be released
69 solely on the basis of the petitioner's failure to attend or testify during the hearing.