

20 August 2021

Clerk of the Court
500 S. Duval Street
Tallahassee FL 32399-1927

To Whom it May Concern,

I understand there is a proposed amendment with the Florida Supreme Court to allow involuntary psychiatric commitment proceedings to be held remotely/virtually.

Having been in communication with many victims who were improperly Baker Act'd, I can assure you allowing Baker Act hearings remotely will open the door to the most egregious harm of individuals by watering down and demolishing their human rights. Involuntary psychiatric commitment is not a light matter.

Some of the examples of misused Baker Acts are these: 1) An adult man and his girlfriend were drunk. They got into an equally nasty argument. The drunk woman called the cops and had her boyfriend Baker Act'd. 2) An adult woman was visited by her sister. They got into a heated argument. The visiting sister called the cops to come and Baker Act the sister who lived there then left. She was not there when the cops arrived. 3) A boy in school, in his creative writing class wrote a Steven King type story. The teacher had this A student Baker Act'd as suicidal because of his story. The psychiatric facility used the story to justify holding the boy and recommended having him committed. It took an in-person attorney to free the boy. 4) This one was in the papers. A man was ordering a pizza to be delivered—his last before going on a diet. He told the girl who took his order it was his last pizza. She decided he was suicidal and called the cops who Baker Act'd him.

It is too easy to misuse this law and ruin lives. To conduct a Baker Act proceeding virtually opens the door for more and faster misuse. I could go on and on with horror stories of innocent minors, elderly with dementia, and misuses of the Baker Act for revenge, punishment or other nefarious reasons.

The right to be present at an involuntary commitment hearing must be upheld as a fundamental human right and a due process right. And no matter what, the Baker Act absolutely should be excluded from the proposed amendment. Psychiatric commitment is scary, long lasting, traumatic, and cases often worsen in psychiatric facilities with seclusion, restraint, psychotropic drugs, ECT and psychosurgery all of which worsen one's mental health and exacerbate mental illness.

Thank you,
Kathy Sweigart
Florida citizen

Received, Clerk, Supreme Court

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