



# Massachusetts Sheriffs' Association

44 School Street, Suite 300  
Boston, Massachusetts 02108



March 13, 2026

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Senator Michael Rodrigues  
Chair, Senate Committee on Ways and Means  
State House, Room 212  
Boston, MA 02133

Sent via email

Dear Chair Rodrigues,

On behalf of the 14 dually elected Sheriffs, we write to express our unanimous and unequivocal support for **S2973, An Act to Provide Continuum of Care for Severe Mental Illness**. This legislation establishes a clear, effective, and compassionate framework for Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT). It creates a structured process that encourages individuals living with severe mental illness (SMI), particularly those who struggle with voluntary treatment adherence, to meaningfully engage with their treatment plans and remain connected to the providers responsible for their ongoing care.

As Sheriffs, we witness firsthand the consequences of untreated or undertreated mental illness. Too often, individuals suffering from SMI cycle repeatedly through our jails and houses of correction. The majority of people in our custody are currently being treated for, or have previously been diagnosed with, a mental illness. Many stabilize while in our facilities because they receive consistent access to medical and mental health services, safe housing, regular meals, and a structured environment. Yet upon release, these essential supports fall away. Without them, many cannot navigate the complex systems required to maintain their treatment independently.

AOT offers a better path. It allows the necessary structure and supports to be implemented in the community, enabling individuals to remain connected to their medical providers, their families, and their support networks. Evidence from other states shows that AOT reduces hospitalizations, increases treatment adherence, and interrupts the revolving door of crisis-driven mental health care. With sustained, coordinated community-based treatment, we can prevent ER boarding, repeated short-term hospitalizations, and avoidable incarcerations.

Importantly, AOT will ease the burden on jails and houses of correction while ensuring that people with mental illness receive care and do not end up in custody. A correctional facility is not the appropriate setting for someone experiencing an acute psychiatric condition. Without medication and treatment, these individuals cannot make rational decisions or maintain stability on their own, and the criminal justice system was never designed to fill

that gap.

For all these reasons, we urge the committee to act decisively and advance S2973. This legislation represents a critical step toward ensuring that individuals with severe mental illness receive the sustained, community-based care they deserve, before a crisis occurs, before another avoidable hospitalization, and before anyone enters our facilities who simply needs treatment, not incarceration. Reporting S2973 favorably will strengthen public safety, reduce the strain on our correctional system, and, most importantly, provide a clear and compassionate path to stability for some of the Commonwealth's most vulnerable residents.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature is cursive and appears to read "Carrie Hill".

Carrie Hill, Executive Director

Cc: Sheriff Patrick Cahillane, President  
Sheriff Nicholas Cocchi, Vice President  
Michael Colwell, Deputy Director