

Opinion We shouldn't criminalize mental health crises

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The April 21 Metro article “Md. court condemns woman’s convictions” addressed a problem that exemplifies much of what is wrong with our criminal law system. As the article reported, the Appellate Court of Maryland, having found that a defendant’s conviction “effectively criminalized her mental health crisis for no legitimate public safety purpose,” nevertheless “grudgingly upheld most of her convictions, saying that they met the letter of the law.”

That a person can be charged with a crime for having acted wrongfully as a result of a conceded mental health crisis is a blot on the prosecutorial system that authorizes it. And that judges who expressly recognize the inequity of such a result nevertheless permit it to stand in the name of the “letter of the law” is another blot on the judiciary, already struggling with questions about its fairness and reasonableness.

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