

HOUSE BILL 2647

By Towns

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 39
and Title 40, relative to severe mental illness.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 39, Chapter 13, Part 2, is amended by adding the following language as a new section:

(a) For purposes of this section, "severe mental illness" means a person has:

(1) Symptoms of psychosis shown by hallucinations, extremely disorganized thinking, or other significant disruptions of consciousness, memory, and perception that are not attributable solely to repeated criminal conduct or the acute effects of the intentional use of alcohol or other drugs; and

(2) A documented medical history of one (1) or more of the following mental disorders as diagnosed using the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) of the American Psychiatric Association:

- (A) Schizophrenia;
- (B) Schizoaffective disorder;
- (C) Bipolar disorder with psychosis;
- (D) Major depressive disorder with psychosis; or
- (E) Delusional disorder.

(b) Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, a defendant with a severe mental illness at the time of committing the offense of murder in the first degree must not be sentenced to death when the conditions of the severe mental illness, while not meeting the standard to be found not guilty by reason of insanity as defined in § 39-11-501, significantly impaired the defendant's capacity to appreciate the nature, consequences,

or wrongfulness of the defendant's conduct related to the offense, or significantly impaired the defendant's capacity to exercise rational judgment in relation to the conduct of the offense.

(c) The burden of production and persuasion to demonstrate to the court that the defendant, at the time of the offense, had a severe mental illness is upon the defendant to prove by a preponderance of the evidence. If the defendant raises the issue, the court shall make the determination of whether the defendant had a severe mental illness at the time of the offense of first degree murder at a hearing prior to the adjudication of the charges.

(d) If the court determines that the defendant was a person with a severe mental illness at the time of the offense, and if the trier of fact finds the defendant guilty of first degree murder, and if the district attorney general has filed notice of intention to ask for the sentence of imprisonment for life without possibility of parole as provided in § 39-13-208(b), then the jury shall fix the punishment in a separate sentencing proceeding to determine whether the defendant must be sentenced to imprisonment for life without possibility of parole or imprisonment for life, pursuant to § 39-13-207.

(e) If the court determines that the defendant is not a person who had a severe mental illness at the time of the offense, the defendant is still entitled to offer evidence of insanity or raise any other applicable mental state defense or claim asserting that the defendant did not form the requisite mental state for the offense at trial, and if convicted of first degree murder, the defendant is still entitled to offer evidence of diminished mental capacity or mental illness as a mitigating circumstance pursuant to § 39-13-204(j)(8).

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2020, the public welfare requiring it, and shall apply to any offense committed on or after that date.