

March 10, 2020

Senator Delores Kelley,  
Chair, Senate Finance Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building  
3 East  
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SUPPORT of Senate Bill 990  
(Public Health – Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program)

Dear Chair Kelley and Senate Finance Committee,

Hello, my name is Justus Nowak. I am a Master's of Science in Nursing degree candidate at The Johns Hopkins School of Nursing representing the voice of my fellow students contributing to this testimony: Mariel Falcon, Marcus Walton, Caitlin Nilles, Sam Spehr, Sam Chang, Alexander Lipson, and Tyler Block. This written testimony is not a reflection of the views from The Johns Hopkins School of Nursing and are entirely our own.

We are advocates for the implementation of Senate Bill 990, which moves to provide a place for the consumption of pre-obtained drugs. Additionally, healthcare workers at these sites can provide sterile needles, administer first aid, and, if it comes to it, save someone's life.

We have spent our clinical time this semester at IBR-REACH, a comprehensive, outpatient, substance use disorder recovery program designed to provide treatment, including medication-assisted treatment, to individuals in the community. As medical professionals, we know that any disease process comes with treatment and hopefully, recovery. This is the basis to any medical intervention. The individuals receiving treatment at IBR-REACH have a diagnosable disease, known as a substance use disorder. In treating their disease, treatment doesn't always go as planned, resulting in episodes of relapse. As in any disease process, medical interventions and various treatment options must be explored before the right treatment plan is found for the individual. We have the opportunity with Senate Bill 990 to provide these individuals, who are struggling with a disease process, a safe place to fall back on while they find a personalized plan for their recovery.

In our clinical time at IBR-REACH in Baltimore, we have seen first-hand what it's like for people struggling with addiction. Before receiving treatment, individuals will take whatever actions they consider are necessary in order to consume the substances they need to return their self-determined baseline, or their "normal". This includes consuming drugs unsafely if they find that necessary which comes with high risks of infection, disease proliferation, and death. We are asking you to help us – as healthcare workers – to prevent additional harm from coming to these patients due to their disease process.

Again, we are advocating for the implementation of Senate Bill 990 in order to provide overdose prevention sites to promote individual safety and health promotion in the process of recovery for individuals struggling with substance use disorders.

Sincerely,  
Justus Nowak, MSN Candidate 2020  
Johns Hopkins School of Nursing