

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 990
Public Health - Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program

TO: Hon. Delores Kelley, Chair, and members of the Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Lisa Bertucci, Baltimore County, Legislative District 42A

DATE: March 10, 2020

I write to urge the passage of Senate Bill 990 because addiction and the overdose death of a loved one have affected me in a very personal way. I strongly support this common sense bill.

Our son, Alex, overdosed in our home in 2016 from heroin and fentanyl and we lost a truly beautiful, kind human being. I was proud to be his mother and exceptionally proud of his efforts to beat his five year addiction to heroin. I can't help but think how an Overdose Prevention Site (OPS) could have helped to protect him. He could have discovered that fentanyl was present in what he was about to inject. At least he would have had a choice.

Overdose Prevention Sites do not cure addiction or eradicate it. They offer proactive, pragmatic interventions for lessening some of the negative impacts of the opioid epidemic. We know people will continue to use drugs, so these sites meet people where they are in their addiction - whether they want a fentanyl test strip or a clean needle to use safely, or whether they are ready to request support for recovery. Sites where people can safely inject their own drugs result in reduced overdose deaths, a reduction in the spread of HIV and Hepatitis C, and increase the likelihood that someone will seek professional help for their addiction. How do we say no to a likely reduction in the sharing of needles? How do we say no to a significant drop in overdose deaths in areas surrounding an OPS? How do we say no to fewer discarded syringes around these same areas? And how do we say no to supporting IV drug users who wish to seek addiction services? We can pass this legislation and accomplish these things with thoughtful planning and the careful implementation of Overdose Prevention Sites. If we don't support this bill, what is the alternative plan for addressing one of the most pressing issues we face all around the state?

My son wanted to be clean and he didn't want to die. He didn't hope to share needles and contract a disease that nearly killed him, nor did he wish to take a fatal overdose of heroin and fentanyl. Your committee holds the power to take this step to support people like Alex. Indeed, you represent *all* of the people in your districts, the young and old, the sick and the well. I strongly urge you to pass SB 990 to not only stand behind your citizens who suffer from substance use disorder, but the communities that experience the effects of non-supervised drug use. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Lisa Bertucci, Towson
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