

Testimony Supporting the Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program (HB464/SB990)
From Powell Recovery Center, Inc.

Powell Recovery Center, Inc. is a nonprofit organization which provides addiction and dual recovery treatment since 1994 in Baltimore City and serves only public health clients. We would like to urge support for Senate Bill 990 regarding Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Programs.

Powell works at ground zero with the fentanyl epidemic and provide rapid crisis management and withdrawal management as well as intensive treatment. Powell is located on the eastside of Baltimore and has an Outreach staff of about 6 people in our community who carry NARCAN. From July 1 to Oct 31, 2019 our Outreach staff patrolling our neighborhood saved over 30 lives of people dying from overdose. These are people who are **not in treatment, who are not Powell clients**. Our Outreach team was able to administer NARCAN to these individuals all of whom were in the last few minutes of life.

People are dying in alleys, empty lots and abandoned buildings all over the City. Over 2018 and 2019 by the State's accounting 1600 people have died in Baltimore City alone. Currently 75 people a month (that we know of) are dying of opioid related overdose in just Baltimore City.

We have no second chance with those who have died needlessly at these extraordinary levels. This is why the Overdose Prevention Service Sites are so critical. We know they will significantly reduce the deaths from this terrible epidemic and give those in need a chance to live. We know the supervision provided at overdose prevention sites can dramatically reduce overdose fatality risk in Maryland and save scarce resources.

Lastly, far from encouraging drug use, overdose prevention sites help people reduce their use of drugs and enter treatment. Powell works hand in hand now to provide rapid treatment admission with harm reduction agencies in the City. It is often difficult for individuals to access this treatment independently. One study of a Canadian facility found that participants increased detoxification services by more than 30%.¹ SAMHSA estimated that of Maryland residents with medically-documented illicit drug dependence, only about 11.8% received treatment.² Overdose prevention sites will provide critical opportunities to help individuals access treatment. Facilities can also provide important medical care on site or through connections to existing resources.

We urge you to remember the tremendous and continuing, needless loss of life resulting from the opioid epidemic and support SB990.

¹ E Wood et al., "Rate of detoxification service use and its impact among a cohort of supervised injection facility users," *Addiction* 102(2007): 918

² United States Dept. of Health and Human Services, Behavioral Health Barometer Maryland, 2014 (Washington, 2015) available at <https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/bhbarometer-md.pdf>