



February 28, 2020

Delegate Shane E. Pendergrass
Chairwoman Health Government Operations
House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support for HB464 Public Health - Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program

Dear Chairwoman Pendergrass and Committee Members,

I am submitting this written testimony to offer my support for HB 464 Public Health- Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention. This intervention is evidence-based, will save lives, and is necessary as we fight to end the overdose crisis.

As a prosecutors, I have recognized that the drug war has been a failure. Baltimore City is a symbol of the drug war's failures. It has brought death and destruction to communities, through overdose fatalities or incarceration. Our approach to drug use must be grounded in public health. That is why I support this intervention.

In 2018, the latest year with published data, Baltimore reported 888 drug overdose deaths. This is more than two times are current homicide rate. Baltimore is not alone. In the United States, we had over 70,000 drug overdose deaths. The overdose rate in our city overwhelmingly impacts people of color and continues to do such.

In early January, I met with representatives from Vancouver and Barcelona who run safe consumption spaces in their jurisdictions. I learned first-hand that this approach can save lives and treat drug users as human beings. I am certain that Baltimore City could benefit from this intervention. I have also traveled to Portugal, Germany, and Scotland and seen the success of other countries as they tackle drug use from a public health lens. We must adopt this approach here.

Our city's overdose rate is unacceptable and calls for all solutions to be put on the table. With the dominance of fentanyl, overdose prevention sites are more essential than ever. The onset of an overdose from fentanyl is so immediate that calling an ambulance might mean death. If someone overdoses on fentanyl in an overdose prevention site, then they can be saved in the timely manner the drugs being used require. There have been no recorded overdose deaths in any overdose prevention site across the world and studies have illustrated that such sites increase the number of drug users who are accessing treatment services.

STATE'S ATTORNEY
Marilyn J. Mosby



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Recently, advocates on Philadelphia won a lengthy court battle to enable the opening of an overdose prevention site. I signed onto an amicus brief in support of the advocates. The Trump Administration's claim that these sites are illegal under federal law were debunked by the court. The stage is now set for America's first overdose prevention site.

Baltimore City, and our state as a whole, should not be much further behind. Lives depend on this intervention. We have tried the drug war and it has failed. We must now embrace public health and harm reduction approaches to drugs. This is why I respectfully urge this committee to provide a favorable report on HB 464 and help save the lives of Maryland residents and their loved ones.

Thank you for your consideration.
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marilyn J. Mosby". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Marilyn J. Mosby
State's Attorney for Baltimore City