

SUPPORT HB 1518

Wednesday, March 11, 2020

1:00 pm

Room 240, House Office Building

To: Health and Government Operations Committee Delegate Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair

From: Elizabeth Stahlman, Cumberland, MD



Re: HB 1518 Opioid-Exposed Newborns and Parents Addicted to Opioids – Mobile Application – Pilot Program

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I write in support of HB 1518. In December of 2016, in a nearby community in Pennsylvania, a 5 month-old infant was found dead in her home with her parents, both who died of fentanyl overdoses. It is believed that the infant died of dehydration/starvation over a period of three to four days and wasn't found until days later. As a mother to a daughter a few weeks younger than this child, it absolutely broke my heart to think about a helpless baby slowly suffering and ultimately dying. In 2017, a toddler in Allegany County was home for a few days alone, fending for herself while walking around her mother - deceased from an overdose. Unfortunately, situations like this are happening all too often, all across the County.

Although my family hasn't been directly impacted by the opioid crisis, I thought about how such a situation could be prevented given limited resources, and that idea is brought forth in HB 1518.

I know that there are horrible people in this world that are going to commit unthinkable crimes that we don't know how to prevent. But children being left in homes with deceased parents isn't the act of someone evil, but the result of suffering from an addiction that they cannot overcome. I have to believe that regardless of their circumstances, those that are at risk for overdosing, would want the best for their children, including the child surviving in the unfortunate event of the parent overdosing.

In Allegany County, a significant percentage of all births are to substance exposed newborns. That means that one in every 6 or 7 infants is going home to a situation in which the parent(s) may be at risk for an overdose. That is a staggering number and something that I hope could be prevented. Although the number of overdoses do seem to be decreasing, the problem still very much exists and young children continue to be at risk.

I know that there is a cost to implementing the proposed application. But as a local government employee, I understand that a lot of what the government does comes at a cost to provide a better and safer life to its citizens. As a Pilot Project, it is my hope that this application could be evaluated in an area hard hit by the opioid epidemic. And, if the Pilot results in saving a child's life, it would be well worth that cost. I strongly encourage your favorable recommendation of HB 1518. Thank you.