

March 14, 2023

The Honorable Senator Melony Griffith
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: SUPPORT of Senate Bill 618
(Public Health – Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program) -
FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Senator Melony Griffith and Senate Finance Committee Members,

On behalf of the North Ave. Mission and Red Shed Village, I am writing to express our unwavering support of SB618 which will allow community-based organizations to establish Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Programs. Many of us, including myself, have lived experience with overdose and lost loved ones to preventable deaths related to overdose.

For many years, the punitive policies enacted in the name of the racist war on drugs have forced people who use drugs to face incarceration, suffer social and emotional isolation, and engage in risky behaviors that put their health and that of others at risk. We believe that our community and every community in Maryland deserve more. **We believe people who use drugs deserve dignity, respect, equitable health care, and justice.**

In 2022, we lost over 2,400 Marylanders to fatal overdoses. We urge the General Assembly to authorize Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services, an intervention proven to decrease overdose deaths for over 30 years.

Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Programs are safe, community spaces that provide people who use drugs with a place to safely use drugs and have immediate access to lifesaving interventions. There are currently 200 sites in 14 different countries, some have been operating for decades. They have been proven to reduce HIV and Hep C transmission, and fatal overdoses. Research has shown that in the first year of opening, overdose fatalities dropped 35% in the area surrounding a single Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program. In New York City, two Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Programs have been operating since November, 2021. Over 600 fatal overdoses have been prevented by the lifesaving interventions of both programs.

North Ave. Mission and the Red Shed Village are in full support of SB618 and the creation of Overdose Prevention Services throughout Maryland. **We ask that you make the right decision and give SB618 a favorable report which supports healing communities instead of continuing legacy of harm.**

Thank You,
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