



LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTION PARTNERSHIP

ADVANCING JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY SOLUTIONS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Lieutenant Diane Goldstein, Ret.
Nevada, USA

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Deputy Chief Wayne Harris, Ret.
Chair, New York, USA

Major Neill Franklin, Ret.
Treasurer, Florida, USA

Professor Jody Armour
Secretary, California, USA

Sergeant Terry Blevins, Fmr.
California, USA

Chief Mike Butler, Ret.
Colorado, USA

Chief Brendan Cox, Ret.
New York, USA

Ms. Nadine Jones
New Jersey, USA

Thomas Schoolcraft
Transitions Coordinator
Minnesota, USA

Supt. Richard Van Wickler, Ret.
New Hampshire, USA

Det. Sgt. Neil Woods, Ret.
Derbyshire, England, LEAP UK

To: Melony Griffith, Chair,
Katherine Klausmeier, Vice Chair, and
Senate Finance Committee Members

From: Major Neill Franklin, Ret., on behalf of the
Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP)

Favorable - Senate Bill 618

Public Health – Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program

Hearing: Tuesday, March 14, 2023, 1:00 p.m.

Distinguished members of the Committee, thank you very much for the opportunity to present the views of the Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP) in support of Senate Bill 618, which would prevent overdose deaths by allowing the opening of overdose prevention sites in Maryland.

The Law Enforcement Action Partnership's mission is to unite and mobilize the voice of law enforcement in support of drug policy and criminal justice reforms that will make communities safer by focusing law enforcement resources on the greatest threats to public safety, addressing the root causes of crime, and working toward healing police-community relations.

I have served in three Maryland police agencies as a commander: the Maryland State Police as the northeast regional commander for the Bureau of Drug and Criminal Enforcement, the Baltimore Police Department as the Chief of human resources and head of training, and the Maryland Transit Administration as the head of Investigation Services, which included drug enforcement. Over my thirty-four-year career, I was responsible for the arrest and jailing of hundreds, if not thousands, of Maryland citizens for low-level drug possession charges. Most of the people I arrested were suffering from addiction.

LawEnforcementActionPartnership.org

Formerly known as Law Enforcement Against Prohibition

One of the most frustrating things about serving in law enforcement is being called to deal with the same people struggling with drug addiction day after day. One of the most painful is being called to a scene where one of those people has suffered a fatal overdose. Police witness these awful scenes and then have to break the news to their families. Yet we do not have the tools to deal with the root causes of addiction and overdose.

Fortunately, there is a tool that we can use to prevent overdose in Maryland – the Overdose Prevention Site. In more than 150 locations across Europe, Canada, and Australia, injection-drug users bring their own drugs into Overdose Prevention Sites (OPS) and inject in the presence of medical staff. In more than two decades of OPS operation, no OPS user has ever died of overdose or contracted HIV or Hepatitis C due to needle-sharing in these facilities. These facilities are one reason that European countries now have far lower overdose death rates than the United States.

I am encouraged to say that since the last time I testified on this issue, New York City has opened two overdose prevention sites. In the last year, staff at these two sites have reversed a combined 600 overdoses. Rhode Island has also passed legislation to allow the opening of overdose prevention sites. I am proud to testify in support of Senate Bill 618, which would have Maryland follow suit.

About nine years ago I had the pleasure of visiting Vancouver's Overdose Prevention Site, "Insite." During my day-long visit I toured the facility and the surrounding community, and I was extremely surprised at what I saw and who I met. I saw clean alleys with "Sharps" containers on poles. I saw literature next to those containers advising people of dangerous heroin laced with problematic "cut." And I saw police officers interacting with people who use drugs in a cordial, helpful manner.

While touring Insite I met Ms. Pearl. Ms. Pearl was a gentle soul who had been addicted to heroin for many years. Prior to her having access to Insite, she had been in and out of the hospital as a victim of several violent crimes, and she was extremely depressed due to isolation.

Ms. Pearl now has hope. She has hope of one day being admitted to Onsite, the inpatient treatment facility on the second floor of Insite. She knows it will be a very difficult task, but she believes that with the love and support of Insite staff, she will succeed. Insite staff give Ms. Pearl a feeling of connection, and connection is the key ingredient in beating addiction.

In order to prevent overdose, create connection, and reduce addiction, the law enforcement members of the Law Enforcement Action Partnership support Senate Bill 618. We ask that you, the members of this committee, give Senate Bill 618 a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Major Neill Franklin (Ret.)
Formerly with the Maryland State Police
Executive Board Member, Law Enforcement Action Partnership