



February 15, 2024

**House Health and Government Operations Committee  
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

*HB 736 – Health Insurance and Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Coverage - Opioid Reversal Drugs and Products (NARCAN Price Cap Act)*

Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB) is a nonprofit organization that serves as the local behavioral health authority (LBHA) for Baltimore City. BHSB works to increase access to a full range of quality behavioral health (mental health and substance use) services and advocates for innovative approaches to prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery for individuals, families, and communities. Baltimore City represents nearly 35 percent of the public behavioral health system in Maryland, serving over 100,000 people with mental illness and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as “behavioral health”) annually.

**Behavioral Health System Baltimore supports HB 736 – Health Insurance and Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Coverage - Opioid Reversal Drugs and Products (NARCAN Price Cap Act).** The NARCAN Price Cap Act will help Marylanders access over-the-counter regardless of their ability to pay, ensuring that this life saving medication is widely available.

The number of overdose deaths in Maryland has skyrocketed in the last ten years. About 2,500 people die of fatal overdose in the state every year, including 1,000 who die in Baltimore City.<sup>1</sup> Every single one of these unfortunate deaths is preventable if there is a bystander with access to naloxone.

Naloxone is a safe and effective overdose reversal medication, and the General Assembly has taken many commendable steps to increase access to the medication. Countless lives have been saved thanks to Overdose Response Programs (ORPs), the standing order for overdose reversal drugs, and Medicaid coverage for naloxone. Nonetheless, Maryland communities continue to suffer an unacceptably high rate of fatal overdose. Our state must take every step possible to ensure this life saving medication is available to all who may need it.

HB 736 would address a loophole that results in over-the-counter naloxone purchased without a prescription costing a potentially prohibitively high amount of over \$40. ORPs and prescription coverage provide affordable naloxone access but not everyone is familiar with ORPs or comfortable getting a prescription. These individuals should be able to use their insurance coverage to obtain naloxone at an affordable price.

The state allows Narcan to be purchased without a prescription to make it widely available but the over-the-counter cost of over \$40 diminishes access. **We urge the House Health and Government Operations Committee to support HB 736 to make sure anyone who needs NARCAN can afford it.**

***For more information, please contact BHSB Policy Director Dan Rabbitt at 443-401-6142***

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<sup>1</sup> Maryland’s Overdose Data Dashboard, available at: <https://stopoverdose.maryland.gov/dashboard/>