



MDDCSAM is the Maryland state chapter of the American Society of Addiction Medicine whose members are physicians and other health providers who treat people with substance use disorders.

House Bill 736. Health Insurance and Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Coverage - Opioid Reversal Drugs and Products

FAVORABLE

Health and Government Operations Committee, February 15, 2024

On behalf of the Maryland-DC Society for Addiction Medicine, I am writing to support Senate Bill 497, which requires health insurers to cover, with a limited co-pay, non-prescription (over-the-counter) naloxone and other FDA-approved medications that reverse opioid overdoses.

In the last decade, more than 17,000 people in Maryland died due to an unintentional opioid overdose.¹ During this time, countless lives have been saved by the use of naloxone, a medication that temporarily reverses the effects of opioids. The Baltimore City Department of Health estimates that community-administered naloxone saved at least 3,000 lives since 2015.² Maryland's policies and laws that created standing prescriptions for naloxone, naloxone training, and naloxone distribution are a public health success story that have undoubtedly saved lives.

In 2023, the Food and Drug Administration approved naloxone for over-the-counter use, and a new opioid reversal medication, nalmefene, for prescription use. Maryland residents now have four ways to access medication for opioid overdose reversal: by prescription from their personal health care provider, by prescription under a standing order from a state or local health official, through distribution from an Overdose Response Program, or over-the-counter.

Stigma, cost, insurance coverage, and local availability determine which of these options an individual chooses. **With a list price of \$45, over-the-counter naloxone is too expensive for many of our patients and neighbors,** especially when that cost is not reimbursed by insurance.

People continue to die of opioid overdose at rates double those seen in 2015. We must diligently pursue strategies that encourage people who use drugs, their friends, and their neighbors to obtain, carry, and use medication to reverse opioid overdoses. **Maryland insurers should cover over-the-counter medication for opioid overdose reversal and limit the copayment to no more than \$10.**

We urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 497.

1. Unintentional Drug- and Alcohol-Related Intoxication Deaths in Maryland, 2021.
https://health.maryland.gov/vsa/Documents/Overdose/2021_AnnualIntoxDeathReport.pdf
2. <https://health.baltimorecity.gov/naloxone>

Jessica Friedman, MD, MPH for MDDCSAM