



**MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE**

March 14, 2024

**HB 295
Overdose Awareness Day**

House Health & Government Operations Committee

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) offers this testimony in support of House Bill 295. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

House Bill 295 would require the Governor to annually proclaim August 31st as Overdose Awareness Day. This legislation is an important step towards raising awareness, promoting compassion, and advocating for solutions to the opioid epidemic and other forms of substance misuse.

Substance use disorders affect individuals from all walks of life and can have profound physical, emotional, and spiritual consequences. As a community guided by the principles of love, mercy, and solidarity, we are called to respond with compassion and support for those who are struggling with addiction, as well as their families and loved ones.

Designating August 31 as Overdose Awareness Day serves as a powerful reminder of the lives lost to overdose and the ongoing need for prevention, intervention, and treatment efforts. It provides an opportunity for prayer, reflection, and remembrance for those who have died from overdose, as well as a call to action for communities to come together to address the root causes of substance abuse and support individuals on their journey towards recovery and healing.

This legislation aligns with the Catholic tradition's emphasis on solidarity and the common good. By raising awareness about the overdose crisis and encouraging collective action to address it, we affirm our shared responsibility to care for the most vulnerable among us and work towards building communities of compassion, support, and hope. The MCC appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 295.

