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Baltimore City

Health and Government Operations
Committee

Chair

Health Occupations and
Long-Term Care Subcommittee

House Chair

Joint Committee on Administrative,
Executive, and Legislative Review



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Testimony of Delegate Samuel I. Rosenberg
Before the Health and Government Operations Committee

In Support of

House Bill 980

Public Health - Opioid Restitution Advisory Council and Fund – Revisions

Madame Chair and Members of the Committee:

In 2019, the General Assembly created the Opioid Restitution Fund to retain any revenues received by the State relating to specified opioid judgments or settlements resulting from charges filed by the Attorney General. The fund may be used only for specified opioid-related programs and services, ranging from prevention and reversal of overdose, treatment of opioid addiction, enforcement of laws relating to opioid prescriptions and sales, and research regarding and training for substance use treatment and overdose prevention.

House Bill 980 would make changes to the Opioid Restitution Fund and to the Opioid Restitution Fund's Advisory Council we saw fit to create in 2022.

This legislation would enhance transparency with regard to the Advisory Council's recommendations on how funds should be spent. Under current law, the Advisory Council makes recommendations to the Secretary, but there is no mechanism for reporting back what decisions are made by the Secretary in response to those recommendations.

While we are confident the current Secretary will report back to the Advisory Council, it is important to ensure that this feedback takes place in a timely manner no matter who sits in the Secretary's position or who serves as Governor at any particular time. In addition, the bill requires that the information be posted on the Department's website.

Second, the bill would provide that at least 25% of the funds are targeted to support community-based recovery organizations in Maryland. The amendment before you defines a community-based recovery organization as a nonprofit organization that is founded and led by members of a state or local substance use recovery community and provides nonclinical

substance use recovery support services at no cost to the participant. These organizations provide a variety of essential services, including case management, care coordination, peer support, funding for housing, naloxone training, and much more.

Finally, this bill requires local governments that receive funding directly from the national settlement agreements to report how they are spending their funds. While there is a reporting requirement under the national settlement agreement, it is prudent to codify into State law that county and municipal governments must meet the same standards of transparency as the State government.

I urge the committee to give a favorable report to HB 980.

February 28, 2024