



March 6, 2024

**House Ways & Means Committee**

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

*HB 1268 - Educational Institutions – Opioid Overdose–Reversing Medications – Policy Requirements*

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 1268 - Educational Institutions – Opioid Overdose–Reversing Medications – Policy Requirements.** This measure will add welcome new requirements for overdose prevention training and liability protections in our schools.

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 last year, including 1,000 who die in Baltimore City.<sup>1</sup> Tragically, this prevalence of overdose also extends to our public schools and institutions of higher education.

Young people today are more likely to experience or witness an overdose than ever before and it is incumbent on all of us that they are equipped to respond appropriately. Naloxone is an effective and easy to administer overdose reversal medication. Students and all staff at our schools should be familiar with it. It is reasonable to add information about this to our official school training programs.

Students, staff, and others who are present at our schools should also be encouraged to use naloxone if they witness an overdose and should be protected from liability if they do so. This is a common-sense extension of existing liability protections in place to protect people acting in good faith to try to save a life. Such behavior should be encouraged.

Maryland must do all it can to equip our communities to prevent fatal overdose. HB1268 is a common-sense initiative to ensure more people are comfortable acting if they witness an overdose. **BHSB urges the House Ways & Means Committee to support HB 1268.**

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

**References:**

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