



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary
February 28, 2024

The Honorable Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 1241 House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: House Bill 980 – Public Health – Opioid Restitution Advisory Council and Fund – Revisions - Letter of Support with Amendments

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (Department) and the Maryland's Office of Overdose Response (MOOR) respectfully submit this letter of support with amendments for House Bill (HB) 980– Public Health – Opioid Restitution Advisory Council and Fund – Revisions.

HB 980 contains technical updates to the name of the Office of Overdose Response and has several provisions relating to transparency around reporting regarding spending from the Opioid Restitution Fund (ORF) and opioid related settlements. The bill adds supporting community-based recovery organizations as a purpose of funding from Maryland's ORF. Additionally, the bill requires that in each fiscal year, at least 25% of the money in the fund be used to support community-based recovery organizations and that each subdivision that receives money from the fund report to the secretary on certain matters related to the use of the funds.

The ORF is key to our work to combat the deadly opioid crisis and the Department supports many of the important updates that HB 980 makes to the ORF process. However, due to the critical nature of the work that the ORF makes possible and the importance of ensuring that funds are spent in accordance with the settlement agreements that make the ORF possible, the Department does suggest some amendments to the bill. Specifically, the Department suggests:

- 1) Amending the funding decision timeline;
- 2) Defining community-based recovery organizations; and
- 3) Striking the 25% minimum funding requirement for community-based recovery organizations..

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Case-Herron, Director of Governmental Affairs, at 410-260-3190.

Sincerely,

Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.
Secretary

Emily Keller
Special Secretary of Overdose Response

