



**2024 SESSION
POSITION PAPER**

BILL: HB 980 - Public Health – Opioid Restitution Advisory Council and Fund – Revisions
COMMITTEE: House Health & Government Operations Committee
POSITION: Letter of Support With Amendments
BILL ANALYSIS: HB 980 establishes certain reporting requirements on political subdivisions regarding expenditures of money received from the Opioid Restitution Fund (ORF), requires the Secretary of Health to present decisions for the allocation of money from the ORF; adds an additional use of the ORF funds to support community-based recovery organizations; and requires at least 25% of the Fund to be used to support community-based recovery organizations.

POSITION RATIONALE: The Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO) offers this Letter of Support With Amendments for HB 980. MACHO supports efforts to improve accountability related to the Opioid Restitution Fund. Local health departments have a long history of working to address the opioid crisis through prevention programming, evidence-based treatment, and the provision of wraparound services to Marylanders affected by opioid use disorder. In collaboration with local stakeholders, local health departments are actively engaged in the development and execution of local abatement plans using ORF funds.

As currently written, the bill requires at least 25% of the money in the Opioid Restitution Fund to be used to support community-based recovery organizations. MACHO recognizes the important role that community-based recovery organizations play in the statewide response to the opioid epidemic; many local health departments partner closely with these organizations in their jurisdictions. However, the requirement that a minimum of 25% of these funds be restricted to this one use may not be in the best interest of each community. Local subdivisions were charged with developing local abatement plans to determine how to use ORF funds to best meet the specific needs of local communities. These plans are already being developed with the involvement of local stakeholders, including community-based recovery organizations, and members of the community. Some jurisdictions are in the final approval process.

As the resources available to address the opioid epidemic vary widely across subdivisions, the establishment of minimum funding requirements may conflict with the needs and priorities identified locally. In addition, each jurisdiction may not have a community-based recovery organization that can receive these funds. Other community-based recovery organizations may not be equipped to manage the level of funding that would be awarded if the 25% requirement were to take effect. ***Decisions regarding the allocation of funding are best made at the local level to allow each jurisdiction to tailor funding decisions to its unique needs and circumstances.***

For these reasons, MACHO respectfully requests the following amendment to the bill text:

- Strike Page 4, Lines 30 through 32.

The proposed amendment will allow local jurisdictions the flexibility to allocate funding as needed, including the ability to award funding to community-based recovery organizations, while preserving the bill's efforts to improve accountability of ORF funding. For these reasons, MACHO provides a Letter of Support With Amendments for HB 980. For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, MACHO Executive Director at rmaiora1@jhu.edu or 410-937-1433. *This communication reflects the position of MACHO.*