



March 13, 2025

**Senate Bill 140 | House Bill 690 - Overdose Awareness Day**

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

House Health & Government Operations Committee

**POSITION: Support**

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Chris Pedersen, and as a lifelong Maryland resident, I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 140 | House Bill 690, which would require the Governor to annually proclaim August 31 as Overdose Awareness Day.

For me, and so many others across our state, this bill is deeply personal. The impact of addiction and overdose is something I have witnessed firsthand—as a person in long term recovery who is 39 years old I have witnessed countless friends and loved ones lose their battle with addiction. I’ve hugged people on a Thursday while they were crying and wishing they were clean, who weren’t here on a Monday. I’ve been a pallbearer for friends. I’ve even been asked to Facilitate an entire memorial service on behalf of another life long friend. When my step son’s 11 year old class mates are coming over to the house in our neighborhood I keep hearing the same answer to my probing family questions..... I live with my grandparents. Their parents have also lost their battle with addiction. Although we may be trending down as a state we have lost thousands of Marylander’s and it's important we recognize this day for each and every one of them. Overdose Awareness Day is not just a symbolic gesture; it is a powerful acknowledgment of the struggles so many face, a way to break the stigma surrounding substance use disorder, and a reminder that recovery is possible.

In 2024, Maryland saw a 38% reduction in fatal overdoses, dropping from 2,511 deaths in 2023 to 1,553 deaths<sup>1</sup>. This progress reflects the incredible work happening across our state—from expanded harm reduction programs to comprehensive treatment options. Here in Anne Arundel County, initiatives like the Overdose Response Training program equip community members with life-saving skills, including the administration of naloxone, which can reverse the effects of

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<https://governor.maryland.gov/news/press/pages/governor-moore-announces-dramatic-decrease-in-fatal-overdoses-in-maryland-in-2024.aspx>



an opioid overdose. Programs like these meet people where they are, providing critical resources that help prevent unnecessary deaths.

But we must do more. By officially recognizing Overdose Awareness Day, we have the opportunity to honor those we've lost, support those in recovery, and continue the fight against addiction with compassion and education. Those who have struggled and survived should know that their journeys matter. Families mourning loved ones should have a day to remember, to grieve, and to advocate for change.

Passing Senate Bill 140 | House Bill 690 would send a clear message that Maryland is committed to saving lives, promoting recovery, and ensuring that no one suffering from substance use disorder is forgotten. I urge you to support this bill and help us continue to build a community of healing, awareness, and action.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Christopher Pedersen

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