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February 11, 2025

The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee
240 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support – HB 690: Overdose Awareness Day

Dear Chairwoman Pena-Melnyk and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) and the Washington Psychiatric Society (WPS) are state medical organizations whose physician members specialize in diagnosing, treating, and preventing mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Formed more than sixty-five years ago to support the needs of psychiatrists and their patients, both organizations work to ensure available, accessible, and comprehensive quality mental health resources for all Maryland citizens; and strive through public education to dispel the stigma and discrimination of those suffering from a mental illness. As the district branches of the American Psychiatric Association covering the state of Maryland, MPS and WPS represent over 1100 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

There were 1,550 fatal overdose deaths in Maryland in 2024. Although this number is less than in prior years, it is still unacceptably high, and each of these tragic deaths is preventable. The overdose crisis continues to hurt some populations more than others, the state's press release said. Older Black men and younger Hispanic people in Maryland have died at disproportionately high rates. Increasing awareness of the danger of drug overdoses and deaths from this is a major public health problem, and resources for increasing awareness of this problem will prevent overdoses and save lives.

We therefore ask for a favorable report of HB 690. If you have any questions regarding this testimony, please contact Lisa Harris Jones at lisa.jones@mdlobbyist.com.

Respectfully submitted,
The Maryland Psychiatric Society and the Washington Psychiatric Society
Legislative Action Committee