

January 26, 2020

Chair Delores Kelly  
Finance Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building, 3 East  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: SUPPORT of Senate Bill 279  
(Public Health - Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program) -  
FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Kelly and Senate Finance Committee Members,

My name is Sarah Kattakuzhy, MD, and I am a physician, scientist, and Assistant Professor at the University of Maryland School of Medicine in Baltimore. I am writing this letter to offer my full support to Senate Bill 279 "Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program," which will allow community-based organizations to establish overdose prevention programs to reduce overdose deaths, which continue to occur at unprecedented levels in Maryland.

I have practiced and conducted research in the fields of HIV, viral hepatitis, and opioid use disorder over the last ten years. The data on Overdose Prevention Sites is unequivocal- not only in preventing overdose, but in reducing HIV and HCV transmission risk behaviors, and linking individuals with opioid use disorder into treatment. Furthermore, data supports that individuals with opioid use disorder want Overdose Prevention Sites, and would utilize them as a culturally-competent space centered in safety, compassion, and dignity. The "War on Drugs" philosophy of alienation, segregation, and stigmatization has left 750,000 Americans dead in the last 20 years. As a physician, I urge the Committee to listen to science, reason, and the voices of your constituents most affected by opioid use disorder.

**I ask that the Finance Committee give SB279 a favorable report.** If you have any further questions, I would be delighted to speak further on this vital and timely bill. I can be contacted at 202-550-2685 and at [skattakuzhy@ihv.umaryland.edu](mailto:skattakuzhy@ihv.umaryland.edu).

With deep regards,



Sarah Kattakuzhy, MD