

I am writing in support of SB0279 to authorize overdose prevention sites (OPS). I am a long time resident of Highlandtown/Baltimore Highlands in Baltimore City, a neighborhood where many people who use drugs (PWUD) live and work, where there are open air drug markets and the well known sex worker stroll, Conkling Street. I also have experience in harm reduction, including 8 years of Thursday nights working on the needle exchange van on The Block in Baltimore City.

If there were an OPS that my PWUD neighbors could access, many would be able not only to access equipment for safer injection and be safe from dying of opioid overdose, but also to access other health and social services including drug treatment programs and homeless services.

In the past few years, there have been many house fires near where I live, most in vacant houses to which PWUD gained access. Although establishment of OPS in Maryland will not immediately prevent all the house fires in my neighborhood, it will help reduce them in several ways. First, fires started by people while they are using or soon after will be reduced if those people are using at an OPS. Second, over time, through harm reduction, people will be given opportunities to make changes in their lives that will keep them and their communities safer and healthier.

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