



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Marc Elrich
County Executive

January 26, 2021

TO: The Honorable Delores G. Kelley
Chair, Finance Committee

FROM: Marc Elrich
County Executive

RE: SB 279, Public Health - Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services
Program, Support

Senate Bill 279 would allow the Maryland Department of Health, in consultation with local health departments, to approve up to six single-site programs throughout the State in areas with high incidence of drug use, where drug users can access a location that is supervised by health care professionals in order to consume pre-obtained drugs; obtain sterile injection supplies and dispose hypodermic needle and syringes; be monitored for potential overdose and receive rescue medication, including naloxone; and receive access or referrals to services such as substance abuse disorder counseling and treatment services. Program sites would be established by hospitals, clinics, substance abuse treatment centers, medical offices, federally qualified health centers, mental health facilities, local health departments, or faith-based organizations. To the extent possible, the program sites would include two sites in urban areas, two sites in suburban areas, and two sites in rural areas of the State. The bill would take effect July 1, 2021 and sunset four years later, on June 30, 2025.

Safe consumption sites such as those provided for by Senate Bill 279 are well-studied and shown to positively impact public health by reducing the transmission of HIV and hepatitis C,¹ reducing fatal overdose,² facilitating entry into addiction treatment,³ and through addiction

¹ Sherman, S., Hunter, K., and S. Rouhani. 2017. Safer drug consumption spaces: a strategy for Baltimore City. The Abell Report, 29(7).

² *Id.*

³ DeBeck, K., Kerr, T., Bird, L., Zhang, R., Marsh, D., Tyndall, M., Montaner, J., and E. Wood. 2011. Injection drug use cessation and use of North America's first medically supervised safer injection facility. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* (113) 172-176.

The Honorable Delores G. Kelley

Re: Senate Bill 279

January 26, 2021

Page 2

treatment support injection cessation.⁴ Because these positive public health outcomes benefit Marylanders struggling with addiction as well as our communities as a whole, Montgomery County supports Senate Bill 279 and respectfully urges the Committee to issue a favorable report.

cc: Members of the Finance Committee

⁴ *Id.*