

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 Meredith Zoltick and I am a nurse practitioner at the Baltimore City Health Department and Johns Hopkins Hospital. I support the Senate Bill 279 "Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program," which will allow community-based organizations such as our organization to establish overdose prevention programs to reduce overdose deaths, which continue to occur at unprecedented levels in Maryland.

As a nurse practitioner that takes care of people who use drugs, I have seen first-hand the need for additional overdose prevention services. I prescribe buprenorphine, a medication to treat opioid use disorder, and spend a lot of time talking about overdose prevention with my patients. Since I have started working as a nurse practitioner, I have had many patients experience fatal and non-fatal overdoses. My patients also experience other health related harms such as skin and soft tissue infections, HIV, Hepatitis C, and other infectious diseases. The current services we have available are not doing enough to keep people alive and healthy. The data supporting overdose prevention sites is incredible. I strongly believe that having overdose prevention sites in the state of Maryland would be very beneficial and would continue the state's legacy of being a harm reduction leader in the country.

For over 30 years, it has been proven that Overdose Prevention Sites save lives. We urge the General Assembly to authorize overdose and infectious disease prevention services, a proven intervention used across the globe to decrease overdose deaths. The proposed Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program mirrors more than 150 such programs already established across the world. More than 60 cities in 12 countries operate such programs, and numerous studies demonstrate the positive impacts. In all of the 150+ OPS around the world, in which millions of supervised drug injections have occurred, **no one has died of a fatal overdose.**

We ask that the Finance Committee give SB279 a favorable report.

For more information about my position, please contact Meredith Zoltick at Mzoltic1@jhu.edu

Thank you for your consideration,

Meredith Zoltick, MSN/MPH, CRNP