

STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
OPIOID OPERATIONAL COMMAND CENTER



ROBIN E. RICKARD
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
100 COMMUNITY PLACE
CROWNSVILLE, MARYLAND 21032

January 18, 2022

The Honorable Delores Kelley
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SB 196 –Maryland Department of Health - Overdose Report – Letter of Support

Dear Chair Kelley and Committee Members:

The Opioid Operational Command Center (OCCC) is submitting this letter of support for Senate Bill (SB) 196 - Maryland Department of Health (MDH) Overdose Report.

In 2018, the Maryland General Assembly (MGA) enacted House Bill (HB) 922 (Chapter 211 of the Acts of 2018), which requires the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to produce an annual report linking overdose death records to various system-level datasets for the purpose of establishing overdose risk profiles. Information gleaned from these risk profiles will inform statewide policy and strategy aimed at reducing overdose mortality. At a time when the state and country are grappling with an increase in overdose-related deaths, having actionable information on populations at the greatest risk for overdose is vitally important for ensuring that resources are directed as effectively as possible.

The previous legislation requiring MDH to produce this report will sunset on July 31, 2022. SB 196 would extend the sunset date by two years to July 31, 2024. MDH laid the foundation for the annual overdose report and then in January 2021, the Governor's Office identified the OCCC as the lead agency to produce the overdose report. Once the transfer occurred the OCCC formalized the various efforts being undertaken in support of the project under a new framework titled the Data-Informed Overdose Risk Mitigation (DORM) initiative.

In close partnership with the Behavioral Health Administration, substantial progress has been made to establish a robust programmatic foundation that supports inter-agency data sharing, linkage, and analysis to continue to advance the DORM initiative. The OCCC submitted the first report under this new framework (DORM) to the Governor and the MGA in June 2021. The findings from this report have helped identify opportunities for novel programs and interventions that have the potential to immediately reduce opioid-related mortality. This has been critically important for the development of our annual Inter-Agency Opioid Coordination Plan, Maryland's strategic framework for addressing the opioid and overdose crisis.

The recent increase in momentum for DORM has helped our office to substantially improve the data foundation for the state's opioid and overdose response. This, in turn, will help make various programmatic efforts more effective. MDH is currently negotiating with several other state departments to incorporate their datasets into next year's DORM report, which will further strengthen analyses.

With the tremendous amount of progress that has been made to advance the DORM initiative and the very real impacts that we have seen as a result of this work, we urge a favorable report for SB 196. Thank you for your time and consideration. If you would like to discuss this further please contact Marianne Gibson at 443-381-4377 or marianne.gibson@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robin E. Rickard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Robin" and last name "Rickard" clearly legible, and "E." as a small middle initial.

Robin E. Rickard
Executive Director
Opioid Operational Command Center