

CLINICAL LAW PROGRAM

March 20, 2023

Chair Griffith
Senate Finance Committee
3 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: SB 914 – Favorable

Dear Chair Griffith and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to inform you of the Justice for Victims of Crime Clinic's support for SB 914. As a student attorney in the clinic, I was assigned to assist my client, Melanie Yates, at the start of the new year. Like so many of her fellow Marylanders, [Melanie lost a loved one](#) to the fentanyl epidemic. Melanie came to our clinic with the goal of saving as many of her neighbors as possible from a similar fate, specifically through more standardized fentanyl testing in hospitals. Thanks to Melanie's courage, and Senator Ellis' enthusiastic sponsorship, this bill is in front of your committee today.

Over the course of our clinic's research on the issue, we became aware of how meaningful SB 914 would be in the fight against the opioid epidemic. Synthetic opioids like fentanyl caused [~70% of overdose deaths](#) in 2021. Still, shockingly, [only 5% of suspected overdose patients](#) are tested for the drug in the emergency room – a much lower rate than other drugs. Statistics like these [led California to pass similar legislation](#) to SB 914 late last year, and [why other states are starting to follow their example](#).

Senator Ellis has further conveyed to us that he has amended SB 914 to mirror language added to HB 811, the bill's crossfile that passed unanimously, 132 – 0, in the House of Delegates. These amendments more narrowly target certain testing protocols and clarify that testing data reported to the State will be anonymized. I, along with the Justice for Victims of Crime Clinic, urge you to support this commonsense measure that could save the lives of countless Marylanders. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach me at the email below.

Sincerely,

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