



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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HB 953

DATE: March 7, 2023

SPONSOR: Delegate Peña-Melnyk, et al.

ASSIGNED TO: Health & Government Operations

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POSITION: FAVORABLE (Department of Health and Human Services)

Public Health – Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program

House Bill 953 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 supplies for personal drug administration and dispose of the supplies; 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, among other 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. The bill would take effect July 1, 2023 and sunset four years later, on June 30, 2027.

Safe consumption sites such as those provided for by House Bill 953 are well-studied and shown to positively impact public health by reducing the transmission of HIV and hepatitis C¹, reducing fatal overdose², facilitating entry into addiction treatment³, and through addiction treatment support injection cessation⁴. Because these positive public health outcomes benefit Marylanders struggling with addiction as well as our communities as a whole, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services supports House Bill 953 and respectfully urges the Committee to issue a favorable report.

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.

⁴ *Id.*