



MARIAN HOUSE

Women Moving from Dependence to Independence

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB953

March 3, 2023

Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk
Room 241
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Testimony of Marian House in Support of HB 953

**Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice-Chair Cullison,
and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,**

Marian House is a holistic, healing community for women and their children who are in need of housing and support services. Marian House provides comprehensive support services to assist women with experiences of trauma, including poverty, substance abuse, and incarceration. **I write to urge you to support House Bill 953 – Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program.**

Over forty years ago, Marian House was opened to provide reentry supports for women leaving incarceration as Sisters and laywomen recognized that lack of support contributed to recidivism rates. Today, we have also expanded to serve women with histories of trauma including homelessness, incarceration, neglect, substance abuse and mental health needs. Since our opening, we have assisted women who have been victims of crime in reinventing and rebuilding themselves through services such as: counseling, substance abuse treatment, job training and providing both long and short-term housing. All the women we have served have overcome obstacles on their journeys to become contributing members of society in the Baltimore area.

Every day in 2019, nearly seven Marylanders died from an opioid overdose – and COVID-19 has led to even more fatal overdoses. According to the most recent data available, there was a 15% increase in overdose deaths during the first nine months of 2020. Overdose Prevention Sites (OPS) are safe, private facilities that provide people who use drugs a place for consumption and life-saving interventions, like naloxone and access to treatment services. OPS are a proven solution to the opioid overdose crisis and data has shown that overdose fatality dropped 35% in the area around a single OPS within one year of opening.

This bill would allow community-based organizations to establish OPS where people could use pre-purchased drugs in a supervised setting. The supervision provided at overdose prevention sites can dramatically reduce overdose fatality risk in Maryland and save scarce resources. **HB953 will help save lives, therefore, we urge your SUPPORT of HB953.**

Thank you for your support,

Katie Allston, LCSW-C
President and C.E.O.