

March 7, 2023

The Honorable Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk  
Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee  
Room 241, House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: SUPPORT of House Bill 953  
(Public Health – Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program) -  
FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk and House Health and Government Operations Committee Members,

My name is Meredith Zoltick and I am a nurse practitioner in Baltimore City and I strongly support House Bill 953 “Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program,” which will allow community based organizations to establish overdose prevention programs to reduce overdose deaths, which continue to occur at unprecedented levels in Maryland.

As a nurse practitioner in Baltimore City, I have seen firsthand how essential the city’s current harm reduction services are for my patients, but I have also seen where our current services are lacking. My patients continue to have fatal overdoses at alarming rates. They are also coming in with preventable skin and soft tissue infections as well as infectious diseases. After visiting the overdose prevention sites in New York City, reviewing the current research, speaking with other providers and advocates around the world, and listening to my patients I strongly believe that overdose prevention sites will not only save lives, but improve the wellbeing of people in our community.

In 2022, we lost over 2,400 Marylanders to fatal overdoses. We urge the General Assembly to authorize overdose and infectious disease prevention services, an intervention proven to decrease overdose deaths for over 30 years. The proposed Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program mirrors the 200 such programs already established across the world in 14 countries, including two in the United States. In all of the 200 OPS around the world, in which millions of supervised drug use interactions have occurred, **no one has died of a fatal overdose.**

This is an emergency and we urge you to act now. **We ask that the Health and Government Operations Committee give HB953 a favorable report.**

For more information about my position, please contact Meredith Zoltick, CRNP at [MZoltick@ihv.umaryland.edu](mailto:MZoltick@ihv.umaryland.edu)

Thank you,

Meredith Zoltick, MSN/MPH, CRNP