

March 3, 2023

From:

Elizabeth Spradley  
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District 40

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 Elizabeth Spradley, I live in Baltimore City representing the 40th district. I want to thank you for your time today to discuss HB953, “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.

I am a nurse and for the last 10 years I provided direct patient care to people who use drugs in Baltimore City. Recently, I have a new job working with syringe service programs and local health departments across Maryland around substance use and harm reduction; my new state-level perspective is illuminating the disparities in services and spaces offered to people who use drugs in each county. Since becoming a nurse, most drug treatment options continue to be too restrictive with limited spaces and unrealistic expectations. We must embrace overdose and infectious disease prevention sites to stop fatal overdoses and the spread of infectious diseases. The strain of conventional approaches is too great on our tenuous healthcare system.

In 2022, we lost over 2,400 Marylanders to fatal overdoses. I 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.**

We need to change our approach toward drug use in Maryland to include overdose prevention sites. This is an emergency and I urge you to act now. I ask that the Health and Government Operations Committee give HB953 a favorable report.

Thank you,  
Elizabeth Spradley RN BSN

