



# PROGRESSIVE MARYLAND

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## Testimony on Maryland House Bill 953 Public Health – Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program

**TO:** Chair Pena-Melnik and members of the Health & Government Operations Committee

**FROM:** Alfrieda Hylton, Progressive Maryland Drug Policy Taskforce Leader, Prince George's County (D24)

**DATE:** February 28, 2023

**POSITION:** Favorable

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on HB 953. Progressive Maryland is a grassroots, nonprofit organization with 9 chapters from Frederick to the Lower Shore and more than 100,000 members and supporters who live in nearly every legislative district in the state. In addition, there are dozens of affiliated community, faith, and labor organizations across the state that stand behind our work. Our mission is to improve the lives of working families in Maryland. Please note our strong support for this bill.

I have a granddaughter who's 27 years of age, a heroin addict and I've seen the side effects of the drugs and witness withdrawals, reckless behavior, where she becomes unrecognizable. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the overdose crisis and to share my views on how it's affecting individuals, families, and communities across our nation. I'm devastated by the misused and increasing prescription and illicit opioid abuse, addiction, and overdose, including paraphernalia, heroin, and methadone. The most alarming is the significant and continued increases in overdose deaths. Too many of our citizens are being robbed of their God-given potential in the prime of their life. Healthcare providers prescribed opioids to treat pain in ways that are high risks associated with opioid abuse, addiction, and overdose when prescribed at high doses and longer durations. There is a lack of health system and healthcare provider capacity to identify and engage individuals that provide them with high-quality, evidence-based opioid addiction treatment.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention in Maryland, nearly 90% of drug overdose deaths involved opioids in 2018; a total of 2,087 deaths (a rate of 33.7). and, in 2018, 67,367 drug overdose deaths occurred in the United States. The age-adjusted rate of overdose deaths decreased by 4.6% from 2017 (21.7 per 100,000) to 2018 (20.7 per 100,000). Opioids—mainly synthetic opioids (other than methadone) are currently the main driver of drug overdose deaths. Opioids were involved in 46,802 overdose deaths in 2018 (69.5% of all drug overdose deaths). Two out of three (67.0%) opioid-overdose deaths involved synthetic opioids. Thus, treating only the individual with the active disease of addiction is limited in effectiveness. Do you know that you can help people who are most at risk for opioid use disorder and overdose in the State of Maryland? As well as helping those struggling with opioid, heroin, and methadone use disorder find the right care and treatment. I strongly believe

representatives of District 24 are willing to take a major step to combat substance misuse and protect the State of Maryland communities from the scourge of opioid, heroin, and methadone addictions by providing support to those individuals fighting addictions and having access to appropriate interventions treatment facilities, as well as expanding government services to individuals battling with drug addiction.

We urge a favorable report.