

CLINICAL LAW PROGRAM

February 21, 2023

Chair Peña-Melnyk
Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: HB 811 – Favorable

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk and members of the committee:

The Justice for Victims of Crime Clinic proudly supports HB 811. As a student attorney in the clinic, I was assigned to assist my client, Melanie Yates, at the start of the new year. Like so many of her fellow Marylanders, Melanie lost a loved one to the fentanyl epidemic. Melanie came to our clinic with the goal of saving as many of her neighbors as possible from a similar fate, specifically through more standardized fentanyl testing in hospitals. Thanks to Melanie's courage, and Delegate Vogel's enthusiastic sponsorship, this bill is in front of your committee today.

Over the course of our clinic's research on the issue, we became aware of how meaningful HB 811 would be in the fight against the opioid epidemic. Synthetic opioids like fentanyl caused [~70% of overdose deaths](#) in 2021. Still, shockingly, [only 5% of suspected overdose patients](#) are tested for the drug in the emergency room – a much lower rate than other drugs. Statistics like these [led California to pass similar legislation](#) to HB 811 late last year, and [why other states are starting to follow their example](#).

HB 811 gives health care providers and the State better data to fight what is clearly a public health crisis in our communities. The Justice for Victims of Crime Clinic urges you to support this commonsense bill that could save the lives of countless Marylanders. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach me at the email below.

Sincerely,

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*Student Attorney practicing pursuant to Rule 19-220 of the Rules Governing Admission to the Maryland Bar