



BALTIMORE CITY

SUBSTANCE ABUSE DIRECTORATE

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House Bill 953 – Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Programs - **Favorable**

Health and Government Operations Committee

March 7, 2023

The Baltimore City Substance Abuse Directorate (Directorate), a Baltimore City membership organization comprised of substance use disorders treatment providers providing all levels of care, supports House Bill 953, which will allow jurisdictions to develop Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention programs to reduce fatal and non-fatal overdoses and provide much needed services to those who use opioids.

Maryland has been a leader in the harm reduction field and in its multi-faceted and aggressive approach has effectively saved lives with harm reduction efforts of increased naloxone distribution and syringe exchange services; increased access and availability to evidenced-based medication assisted treatment with methadone and buprenorphine; greater implementation of peer recovery specialists in medical and community settings; and creative jurisdictional Opioid Intervention Teams across the state. But more is needed, however, in order to save lives and continue to address the opioid crisis. The proposed Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program is based on similar programs operating in more than sixty (60) cities in ten (10) countries. It's time for Maryland to join them.

The results and evidence from these successful harm-reduction facilities is unequivocal – they reduce overdose deaths, provide an entry into treatment, reduce public use and publicly discarded syringes, are cost-effective and they do not encourage or increase additional drug use or crime. Maryland needs to add this tool in the great work being done to reduce overdose deaths and improve access to needed health care.

For the reasons stated above, The Directorate urges a favorable report on House Bill 953.

Sincerely,

Ashley Archie, LCSW-C

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President

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