



REACH HEALTH SERVICES

House Bill 953 – Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Programs Support

March 7, 2023

Health and Government Operations Committee

The Institutes for Behavior Resources, Inc. 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.

The current increase in fatal overdoses translates to the loss of over 2,400 Marylanders during 2020 from Opioid misuse. Despite Maryland’s continued efforts of prevention, enforcement and treatment & recovery, opioid addiction and misuse in 2020 will unfortunately claim the largest number of Maryland lives in any single year on record.

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. More is urgently needed, however, in order to save lives and change the trajectory of the continued 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, and most recently in New York City. 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 Institutes for Behavior Resources urges a favorable report on HB 953.