

March 7, 2023

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,

As a public health and infectious disease nurse practitioner working with patients who use drugs in Baltimore City, I strongly support House Bill 953 “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 work for Johns Hopkins University, Behavioral Health Leadership Institute, and the Baltimore City Health Department providing treatment for opioid use disorder, but I am writing as an individual clinician with specific expertise in this area of healthcare, not as a representative of these organizations. I spend my life working the frontlines in our communities hardest hit by the opioid overdose crisis, and have lost more patients and loved ones to overdose than I can count; recovery from substance use disorder is not a straight path, and unfortunately, we have no safety net to protect those that are most vulnerable. **Evidence proves that overdose prevention sites save lives, save money, do not increase crime, and provide another much-needed avenue to substance use disorder treatment. This bill does not allocate taxpayer monies to fund these sites, it simply *allows these sites to exist* and allows us to do something to prevent more Marylanders from dying a very preventable death.**

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.**

This is an emergency and I urge you to act now. **We ask that the Health and Government Operations Committee give HB953 a favorable report.**

For more information about my position on this bill, please contact me at [mkerr14@jh.edu](mailto:mkerr14@jh.edu).

Sincerely,  
Dr. Meredith Kerr, DNP, CRNP, FNP-C