



TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF SB532
Criminal Law – Overdosing in Public - Prohibition

March 7, 2023

Senator William C. Smith
2 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Testimony of Marian House in Opposition of SB532

**Dear Chair Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher,
and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,**

Marian House is a holistic, healing community for women and their children who are in need of housing and support services. Marian House provides comprehensive support services to assist women with experiences of trauma, including poverty, substance abuse, and incarceration. **I write to urge you to OPPOSE SB532, Criminal Law – Overdosing in Public – Prohibition.**

Over forty years ago, Marian House was opened to provide reentry supports for women leaving incarceration as Sisters and laywomen recognized that lack of support contributed to recidivism rates. Today, we have also expanded to serve women with histories of trauma including homelessness, incarceration, neglect, substance abuse and mental health needs. Since our opening, we have assisted women who have been victims of crime in reinventing and rebuilding themselves through services such as: counseling, substance abuse treatment, job training and providing both long and short-term housing. All the women we have served have overcome obstacles on their journeys to become contributing members of society in the Baltimore area.

Research has shown over and over again that criminalization of drugs does not work to help save or improve the lives of people who use drugs. In fact, arrests for all drug-related crimes have little to no impact on the distribution of drugs in our communities and there is no evidence that things will be different with this continued approach.

Criminalizing overdoses is not drug prevention, it is a continued manifestation of the stigma surrounding substance use that continues to prevent individuals from getting the help they need. While we understand that SB532 allows a court to refer an individual to drug court or substance abuse treatment, the option remains that they would be criminalized if they do not choose treatment or drug court. We oppose the possibility of individuals being criminalized for a disease. They need help and not with the force or fear of imprisonment. **SB532 is not the way forward and we urgently request your OPPOSITION of this bill.**

Thank you for your support,

Katie Allston, LCSW-C
President and C.E.O.