



**WASHINGTON COUNTY  
FREE LIBRARY**

*Where People & Possibilities Meet*

**Judicial Proceedings  
SB0532 – Criminal Law – Overdosing in Public - Prohibition  
March 7, 2023**

**Informational Only**

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstriecher and Committee members:

As the Executive Director of the Washington County Free Library, a major downtown Hagerstown anchor, I have witnessed the direct impact of active addiction on our patrons and staff at our central location. While we have a positive relationship with the City Police, who employ Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) tactics and provide compassionate response to those experiencing crisis, as well as the Washington County Health Department and local case management firms, we recognize the need for additional support for those with mental health disorders, including active addiction.

Despite our community's efforts to prevent overdose with pre-arrest diversion and other tools, public overdoses still occur. In 2022, Washington County Free Library personnel were involved in no fewer than seven overdoses in or around our property, causing significant distress for the public and our staff, who often are the first to find individuals experiencing an overdose and call emergency services.

While I cannot speak to the effectiveness of individual fines or imprisonment versus appearing in drug court or a substance abuse program after an overdose, I can affirm that public overdoses are a regular occurrence in our city. They are a significant source of distress for public workers, such as library staff, and contribute to burnout in the library industry.

I urge the committee to consider all options for addressing this issue, for the sake of those in crisis and addiction, as well as those in public professions like the library industry.

Respectfully,

Jenny L. Bakos  
Executive Director  
Washington County Free Library