



HB 667 – Criminal Law – Overdosing in Public - Prohibition

Committee: Judiciary

Date: February 23, 2023

POSITION: Unfavorable

The Maryland Coalition of Families: Maryland Coalition of Families (MCF) helps families who care for a loved one with behavioral health needs. Using personal experience, our staff provide one-to-one peer support and navigation services to family members with a child, youth or adult with a mental health, substance use or gambling challenge.

MCF opposes HB 667.

Over the last decade, the state has been moving from trying to deter drug use with threats of jail time and fines, to connecting drug users to resources. HB 667 is a backward step in the wrong direction.

An individual known to us who is in recovery from an opioid addiction relates the story of using heroin (in Kensington, Philadelphia) and then going out into the street so that he would be found if he overdosed. This is a good, not a bad thing. If those addicted to opioids felt that they would be arrested for overdosing in public, they would be much less likely to undertake such a life-saving measure. More deaths would occur. The provision in the bill that an individual could choose to go to drug treatment instead of jail would matter little to people addicted to opioids. The bill would have the chilling effect of increasing Maryland's overdose deaths. For these reasons we urge a unfavorable report on HB 667.

Contact: Ann Geddes
Director of Public Policy
The Maryland Coalition of Families
8950 State Route 108, Suite 223
Columbia, Maryland 21045
Phone: 443-926-3396
ageddes@mdcoalition.org