

Senate Bill 546 - Criminal Procedure - Medical Emergency - Immunity

SUPPORT

House Judiciary Committee

March 30, 2023

The Maryland-DC chapter of the American Society of Addiction Medicine (MDDCSAM) whose members are physicians and other health providers who treat people with substance use disorders, supports Senate Bill 546.

Early engagement with emergency medical treatment for drug overdoses and other related medical emergencies saves lives. We should do everything in our power to remove barriers to accessing timely emergency medical care.

Fear of legal repercussions can often prevent our patients, or those surrounding them, from calling for emergency medical help after drug overdoses and other associated medical emergencies. Drug overdoses, in particular, can proceed to death or severe anoxic brain injury within minutes – prompt medical attention is of paramount importance. We can reduce statewide overdose mortality rates by expanding Maryland’s Good Samaritan laws and passing this bill.

Good Samaritan laws have been a vital component in the effort to improve outcomes for our patients. Now passed in a majority of states, Good Samaritan laws have consistently been associated with reductions in drug-related overdose deaths, and have not been associated with increased drug use or criminal activity. These laws save lives.

This bill will build upon the positive impact from Maryland’s law created in 2014 and will further protect our patients by reducing fears about negative parole and probation repercussions for the person who survives the overdose or other medical emergency.

As addiction medicine providers, we cannot help patients who have already died from an overdose. Please support this law that will save lives, so we can continue to provide these patients with addiction treatment and a pathway to long-term recovery.

We respectfully request a favorable report.