



March 8, 2024

Senate Bill 103 - Overdose Awareness Day

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

POSITION: Support

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Recovery Housing & Treatment Centers Coalition of Maryland (RHTC), we write to support Senate Bill 103, which would require the Governor to annually proclaim August 31 as Overdose Awareness Day.

RHTC is a coalition of recovery homes and treatment centers located throughout Maryland. We are deeply committed to our organization's mission to addressing the opioid crisis and supporting individuals and families affected by substance use disorders.

This bill is not merely symbolic; it's a crucial step toward acknowledging the pervasive challenges of drug addiction and overdose that plague our communities. Drug addiction, as outlined by both the Centers for Disease Control Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO), represents a rapidly escalating epidemic with devastating consequences, including overdose deaths.

Our advocacy for this bill is further bolstered by the successes observed in other states that have implemented similar recognitions. For instance, Pennsylvania observed its first statewide Overdoes Awareness Day in 2018, a move that has significantly increased public engagement around overdose prevention and substance use disorder education. In the following year, Pennsylvania reported a notable decrease in overdose deaths by approximately 18%, a testament to the impact of raising awareness and destigmatizing use of disorders.

Similarly, Ohio marked August 31st as Overdose Awareness Day in 2017, coupled with a statewide campaign that promoted naloxone distribution and overdose prevention strategies. This initiative led to a marked improvement in public awareness and facilitated a 22% reduction in opioid-related overdose deaths from 2017 to 2018.

Maryland is not immune to opioid crisis that grip our nation. According to the Maryland Overdose Data Dashboard there were 2,513 fatal overdoses in Maryland from October 2022 to



September 2023. By dedicating a day to overdose awareness, we can amplify our collective efforts to combat this crisis, offering hope and support to those struggling with addiction.

Raising Overdose Awareness Day officially will: Raise public awareness about the dangers of drug overdose and the signs of an overdose, potentially saving lives through increased knowledge and preparedness. Reduce the stigma associated with drug-related deaths, encouraging individuals battling addiction to seek help without fear of judgement. Honoring the memory of those we have lost to drug overdoses, acknowledging the grief of families and friends left behind. This legislation represents a critical step toward addressing the overdose crisis that affects our state and nation.

By officially recognizing Overdose Awareness Day, providing and being able to shine a light on those who have survived a once, rough time in their lives, shows the heart of our state. Those who suffer from addiction and have overcome their addictions deserve to feel seen and reminded that they matter. By drawing attention together we can, reduce stigma around substance use disorders, and remember those we've lost to drug overdoses.

Senate Bill 103 represents a significant stride towards confronting the overdose crisis in Maryland with compassion, education, and actionable awareness. By aligning our efforts with successful models from other states, we can foster a community that supports recovery and prevention, ultimately reducing the number of lives lost to overdose. Through education and awareness, individuals are better informed about the dangers of substance misuse, the importance of safe prescribing practices, and the availability of life-saving interventions like naloxone, potentially preventing future overdoses.

It is for these reasons, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 103, affirming Maryland's commitment to preventing drug overdoses and honoring the lives affected by this ongoing epidemic. Thank you for considering our testimony.

For more information, please contact:

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