

February 7th, 2024

The Honorable Bill Ferguson, President of the Senate
State House, H-107
100 State Circle, Annapolis, MD 21401 - 1991

RE: Support to Authorize Up to Six Overdose Prevention Sites in Maryland

Dear Senator Bill Ferguson,

My name is Melissa Sexton, and I am a Johns Hopkins School of Nursing student who resides in your district. It has recently come to my attention that there is legislation set to be heard on Tuesday, 2/20 at 1:00pm, that centers around harm reduction practices. The bill is titled “SB 427: Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program”. This subject was introduced and read on January 19th, 2024, by Senators Hettleman, Washington, Carter, Benson, Feldman, and Lewis Young, and assigned to Finance. This bill authorizes up to six Overdose Prevention Sites in Maryland, where people can use substances with immediate access to life saving interventions, medical care, emotional support, and non-judgmental, therapeutic relationships. The sites would be authorized in two urban areas, two suburban areas and two rural across Maryland.

I strongly support any piece of legislation that would support the authorization of Overdose Prevention Sites in our community. Overdose Prevention Sites have been proven to reduce spread of disease and to improve the overall health of substance users. Out of 150 sites around the world, some of which have been operated since the 1980’s, there have been *zero* overdose deaths inside those centers³. For reference, Baltimore City has one of the highest overdose death rates in the country, and overdoses have been increasing in recent years¹. Overdose Prevention Sites are safe places where people who use drugs can receive medical care and be connected to treatment and social services, if desired. A single OPS in Baltimore is predicted to bring 121 additional people into drug treatment in the first year¹.

As a nursing student, I have observed first-hand how opioid dependence can impact an individual’s life. I am not a representative of the university; however, I appreciate the knowledge that I have received on the subject matter. I kindly implore you to read the provided evidence.

I appreciate your help and ask that you please send me a response letting me know if you are planning on supporting SB 427: Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program.”

Most Sincerely,

Melissa Sexton
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1 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12954-017-0153-2>

2 <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/public/supervised-injection-report.pdf>

3 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2021.04.017>