

February 28, 2024

From:
Elizabeth Spradley
2738 Guilford Avenue
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District 40

The Honorable Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk
Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: SUPPORT of House Bill 1096
(Public Health – Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program) - FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk and House Health And Government Operations Committee Members,

My name is Elizabeth Spradley, I am writing to you to support House Bill 1096 “Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program”. HB1096 will allow community based organizations to establish overdose prevention programs to reduce overdose deaths, which continue to occur at alarming levels in Maryland.

I am a nurse and for the last 11 years I provided direct patient care to people who use drugs in Baltimore City. Recently, I have a new job working with syringe service programs and local health departments across Maryland around substance use and harm reduction; my new state-level perspective is illuminating the disparities in services and spaces offered to people who use drugs in each county. Since becoming a nurse, most drug treatment options continue to be too restrictive with limited spaces and unrealistic expectations. We must embrace overdose and infectious disease prevention sites to stop fatal overdoses and the spread of infectious diseases. The strain of conventional approaches is too great on our tenuous healthcare system. OPS is an evidence-based, logical approach to part of the overdose crisis we are in; we need all the help we can get to address this issue and stop people from dying.

In 2022, we lost 2,587 Marylanders to fatal overdoses. We urge the Maryland General Assembly to authorize overdose and infectious disease prevention services, an intervention proven for over 30 years of research to decrease overdose deaths. The proposed Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program mirrors the 200 such programs already established across the world in 14 countries, including two in the United States. In all of the OPS around the world, in which millions of supervised drug use interactions have occurred, **no one has died of a fatal overdose.**

This is an emergency and we urge you to act now. **We ask that the House Health and Government Operations Committee give HB1096 a favorable report.**

Please feel free to reach out to me or any of us at MDH’s Center for Harm Reduction Services for any questions or needs you have in regards to this bill or services for people who use drugs, elizabeth.spradley@maryland.gov.

Thank you for your time,
Elizabeth Spradley RN BSN