

March 1, 2024

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,

On behalf of the Good Trouble Church, I am writing to express our unwavering support of HB1096 which will allow community-based organizations to establish Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Programs. Many of us, including myself, have lived experience with overdose and lost loved ones to preventable deaths related to overdose.

Like many other amazing community organizations, we have prioritized the distribution of naloxone, fentanyl and xylazine rapid testing strips, and other life-saving interventions within our community. We want you to share in our joy that our efforts have had an impact, within the last month Good Trouble Church outreach workers reversed 3 opioid overdoses. At the same time, we want you to know our heartbreak that within the last month we also lost a loved community member to a preventable death resulting from overdose. This is one of many reasons Good Trouble Church believes we need more in proven live-saving interventions in Maryland, like Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Programs.

In 2022, we lost 2,587 Marylanders to fatal overdoses. We urge the General Assembly to authorize Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services, an intervention proven to decrease overdose deaths for over 30 years.

Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Programs are safe, community spaces that provide people who use drugs with a place to safely use drugs and have immediate access to lifesaving interventions. There are currently 200 sites in 14 different countries, some have been operating for decades. They have been proven to reduce HIV and Hep C transmission, and fatal overdoses. Research has shown that in the first year of opening, overdose fatalities dropped 35% in the area surrounding a single Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program. In New York City, two Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Programs have been operating since November, 2021. Over 1200 fatal overdoses have been prevented by the lifesaving interventions of both programs. A favorable vote on HB1096 will enable us to do the same in Maryland.

Good Trouble Church in full support of HB1096 and the creation of Overdose Prevention Services throughout Maryland. 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.**

Thank You,
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