



March 14, 2024

**House Health and Government Operations Committee  
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

*HB 295 – Overdose Awareness Day*

Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB) is a nonprofit organization that serves as the local behavioral health authority (LBHA) for Baltimore City. BHSB works to increase access to a full range of quality behavioral health (mental health and substance use) services and advocates for innovative approaches to prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery for individuals, families, and communities. Baltimore City represents nearly 35 percent of the public behavioral health system in Maryland, serving over 100,000 people with mental illness and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as “behavioral health”) annually.

**Behavioral Health System Baltimore supports HB 295 – Overdose Awareness Day.** This bill directs the Governor to proclaim August 31 as Overdose Awareness Day in recognition of the thousands of Marylanders who have lost their lives due to overdose.

The number of overdose deaths in Maryland has skyrocketed in the last ten years. About 2,500 people died of fatal overdose in the state last year, including 1,000 who die in Baltimore City.<sup>1</sup> This loss of life is staggering and deserves attention.

Overdose Awareness Day is an internationally recognized day of remembrance for all those impacted by addiction and overdose epidemic. Honoring this day can help raise awareness of this terrible crisis and send a strong message of hope and healing to those struggling with addiction.

The friends and family of those who have lost their lives to overdose also deserve to have their grief recognized and their lost loved ones deserve to be remembered. **BHSB urges the House Health and Government Operations Committee to support HB 295.**

*For more information, please contact BHSB Policy Director Dan Rabbitt at 443-401-6142*

**References:**

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<sup>1</sup> Maryland’s Overdose Data Dashboard, available at: <https://stopoverdose.maryland.gov/dashboard/>