

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify and thank you, Delegate Tomlinson, for sponsoring this bill. My name is Jamel Freeman, I support this bill and speak on the behalf of those whose lives have resulted in the death and serious bodily injury from these controlled, dangerous substances. (heroin and/or fentanyl). I live in Frederick, Maryland County and unfortunately had to witness men and women who have left behind loved ones due to this worldwide health issue. From, diverse recovery rooms, ASAM 3.5 residential institutions, and addiction treatment centers is where I have continued to see these individuals not fully recover or overcome their challenges. I have sponsored men from the Narcotics and Alcoholics Anonymous meetings from Frederick, Hagerstown, Gaithersburg, and facilitated for the Maryland Department of Health for Peer Recovery Month in 2023.

This bill would not only help the lives of those who are in active use and in long term recovery but also deter those individuals who are distributing these controlled dangerous substances. These substances are often implanted in marijuana and circulate through the high schools and other recreational outlets where youth and adults cannot even determine that these more dangerous substances are embedded. By the time they have partaken in self-harming behavior, ingesting these drugs, the person is either dead by overdose or has an internal bodily injury for the rest of their life. Given the high profile of the dangers any individual who distributing heroin or fentanyl should not be given a light punishment. The act of knowing what they are distributing and what this dangerous substance can do gives them full comprehension of this drugs effect on a human being. Distributors must be held accountable, and sentencing cannot be taken lightly. This controlled dangerous substance/enemy does not care of your social economic background, race, culture, and/or religion. Its mission is to eliminate and destroy. I am happy to share my experience as a mobilizer and certified peer recovery support specialist during the Committee's questioning.

Thank you all for allowing me to share my experience, strength, and hope.

Jamel Freeman