



February 4, 2025

House Health & Government Operations Committee & Appropriations

**House Bill 552 - Higher Education – Drug Detection Products – Distribution and Report**

POSITION: FAVORABLE

The Recovery Housing and Treatment Centers Coalition of Maryland (RHTC) writes to support House Bill 552 - **Higher Education – Drug Detection Products – Distribution and Report**. We are a coalition of recovery residences, group homes, treatment centers, and other important services that support the continuum of care throughout Maryland. RHTC works to educate others on the importance of maintaining and expanding recovery facilities and services in Maryland and the benefits that such facilities have on persons in recovery, the community, and the State.

We strongly support House Bill 552, a crucial piece of legislation that mandates institutions of higher education to provide drug detection products at no cost to students and requires annual reporting on their distribution and the use of overdose-reversing medications. This bill is an essential step in addressing the ongoing opioid crisis and ensuring the safety and well-being of students in Maryland's higher education institutions.

The opioid epidemic continues to devastate communities across Maryland and the United States. Among the most dangerous threats is fentanyl, a synthetic opioid that is up to 50 times stronger than heroin. Often mixed into other substances without users' knowledge, fentanyl is responsible for a significant proportion of fatal overdoses. College students, like other populations, are vulnerable to accidental exposure. Providing access to drug detection products, which allow individuals to test substances for the presence of fentanyl, is a proactive harm reduction measure that can prevent fatal overdoses.

House Bill 552 proposes a simple yet highly effective solution—ensuring that drug detection products are readily available at key locations within higher education institutions, including student health centers, libraries, and bathrooms. This easy accessibility ensures that students can make informed decisions about their safety and take precautionary measures if necessary. By distributing these products at no cost, the bill removes financial and accessibility barriers that might otherwise deter students from using them. Similar harm reduction approaches, such as the widespread availability of naloxone (Narcan), have already been proven to save lives, and this initiative follows the same public health model.



An additional strength of House Bill 552 is its requirement that higher education institutions report annually on overdose incidents requiring naloxone and the quantity of drug detection products distributed. This reporting mechanism will provide valuable data on the effectiveness of the program, highlight trends in drug-related incidents, and guide future policy decisions to enhance student safety. Transparency and accountability are essential in ensuring that public health interventions achieve their intended impact.

In conclusion, House Bill 552 represents a critical investment in student safety, harm reduction, and overdose prevention. By ensuring that drug detection products are widely available and tracking the use of overdose-reversing medications, Maryland can take a leadership role in combatting the opioid crisis within higher education settings.

We ask that the Committee vote favorably on House Bill 552 to protect the health and lives of our students.

For more information call or email:

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