



UNIVERSITY SYSTEM *of* MARYLAND

HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

House Bill 552

Higher Education - Drug Detection Products - Distribution and Report

February 4, 2025

Favorable with Amendment

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on House Bill 552. The bill requires each institution of higher education to provide, at no charge to students, drug detection products. A ***“drug detection product”*** is defined as a ***“...disposable test product that allows an individual to test a drug for the presence of fentanyl...”*** and it is to be made available in “...student health centers, libraries, and bathrooms.”

The USM comprises twelve distinguished institutions, and three regional higher education centers. We award eight out of every ten bachelor’s degrees in the State. Each of the USM’s 12 institutions has a distinct and unique approach to the mission of educating students and promoting the economic, intellectual, and cultural growth of its surrounding community. These institutions are located throughout the state, from Western Maryland to the Eastern Shore, with the flagship campus in the Washington suburbs. The USM includes three Historically Black Institutions, comprehensive and research universities, and the country’s largest public online institution.

Opioid misuse and addiction can happen to anyone. Opioid overdose can happen at any time, in any location, on campus, or off campus during university-sponsored events. Students, faculty members, and school staff members who misuse opioids risk overdose, and the presence of opioids on campus increases the likelihood that this will occur. Potential overdose and the traumatic impact of an opioid-related emergency risks long-term physical and psychological damage.

USM institutions deploy a full breadth of “wraparound” strategies to prevent an opioid overdose from occurring on campus in the first place. Institutions routinely collect information regarding student engagement and connectedness, two evidence-based protective factors against substance use in college-age populations. The attitudes and beliefs faculty and students as it relates to substance abuse disorder are as important as the availability of a detection product.

In fact, several USM institutions already participate in the Overdose Response Program sponsored by the Maryland Department of Health (MDH). The program authorizes certain individuals (through the issuance of a certificate) to administer naloxone to an individual experiencing, or believed to be experiencing, opioid overdose to help prevent a fatality when medical services are not immediately available. We are pleased that this program will provide the detection strips to institutions in the program and understand from the sponsors team that an amendment is being offered to require institutions to join the program so all could get the detection strips at no cost. Until then, however, the detection strips will cost institutions. Even when all institutions are in the program, this is not a zero-cost effort, as staff time is portioned to manage the involvement with MDH including, but not limited

to, collecting/reporting on a variety of metrics, ordering, liaising with MDH, and keeping track of resources distributed. Resources will also be needed for receptacles in which to place the detection strips. Most critically, however, as it pertains to cost, the USM remains concerned about the outlying costs if MDH's resources/funding for product procurement and distribution ends. We believe the sponsor is also offering an amendment to address this concern and we appreciate the consideration. As written, House Bill 552 does not mention MDH's contributions to the effort, thus leaving institutions responsible for providing drug detection products at no cost to students if MDH can no longer provide that resource.

To that point, the evaluation and availability of overdose-specific equipment and supplies, such as naloxone kits and medical equipment, is a functional need with a real cost. The fiscal impacts are unknown and it's not clear in House Bill 552 if the detection products will be provided to institutions or if they will be purchased by the state and distributed to colleges and universities. Additionally, on page 2; line 14 calls for the "quantity" of drug detection products to be distributed, without qualifying the protocols by which products are actually distributed. We understand the sponsor will be offering an amendment to this section using the term "made available" as opposed to "distributed." We are supportive of this change.

We also appreciate the sponsors intent through additional amendments to change this directive to a "may" as well as changing the "and" to an "or" in regard to campus locations where the products would be available.

The USM wants to protect students, faculty members, and staff members from an opioid overdose or emergency in all settings and at all times. That starts by reducing the likelihood that an opioid overdose will happen, as well as eliminating or reducing the loss of life by lessening the near and long-term impacts of an opioid overdose.

We support the intent of House Bill 552 and look forward to working with the sponsor to finalize amendments that will address our concerns and make it more plausible for our campuses to carry out this mission.

