

ATTN: Maryland Senate Finance Committee
FROM: Stephen Kane, MD
RE: Support for Senate Bill 83 - Overdose Prevention Centers

Topline Summary: As a practicing physician in Baltimore specializing in family and preventive medicine, I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 83, which would establish Overdose Prevention Centers (OPCs) in Maryland.

Overdoses as a Public Health Crisis

Opioid overdoses have been one of the deadliest public health epidemics in our nation's history, leading to more than 80,000 deaths annually in the United States. In the last two decades, Baltimore has been disproportionately impacted, Baltimore City makes up 9% of Maryland's population but, has been estimated to represent nearly 44% of Maryland's overdose deaths. Baltimore has an average of more than two overdose deaths per day. These deaths are preventable.

Key Evidence Supporting OPCs:

Recent evidence from New York City's experience with OPCs provides compelling data supporting their implementation as a safe and effective public health intervention.

1. ***Life-Saving Potential-*** The data from New York's experience through February 2023 reveals remarkable success in preventing overdose deaths. The centers have served more than 2,300 clients and facilitated approximately 55,000 visits. Staff members have successfully intervened in over 700 potential overdose situations. ***Most significantly, there have been zero fatalities at these facilities since their opening.***
2. ***No increase in crime-*** A comprehensive study published in JAMA Network Open (2023) examining New York City's first two government-sanctioned OPCs demonstrated multiple positive findings regarding community safety. The research found no significant increases in violent or property crimes in OPC neighborhoods. Additionally, there were no increases in public disorder or nuisance complaints in these areas. The study documented no adverse impact on 911 calls for crime or medical incidents. Furthermore, there was no increase in 311 calls regarding drug use or unsanitary conditions in the vicinity of these facilities.
3. ***Comprehensive Care Approach*** The proposed legislation includes several crucial elements that have proven successful in other jurisdictions. These elements include supervision by trained healthcare professionals and access to sterile supplies with proper disposal protocols. The centers will provide linkage to substance use treatment services, HIV and hepatitis testing, reproductive health services, and wound care. Additionally, the facilities will offer comprehensive overdose prevention education to all participants.

Public Health Impact:

As a physician, I regularly witness the devastating impact of the overdose crisis on Maryland families and communities. OPCs represent an evidence-based intervention that can save lives while maintaining community safety. The New York City experience proves that these facilities can operate effectively within our existing healthcare and public safety framework.

1.Samuels EA, Bailer DA, Yolken A. Overdose Prevention Centers: An Essential Strategy to Address the Overdose Crisis. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2022;5(7):e2222153. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.22153
2.Chalfin A, del Pozo B, Mitre-Becerril D. Overdose Prevention Centers, Crime, and Disorder in New York City. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2023;6(11):e2342228. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.42228