

MALCOLM AUGUSTINE
Legislative District 47
Prince George's County

PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

Executive Nominations Committee

Education, Energy and the
Environment Committee



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 214
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3745 · 301-858-3745
800-492-7122 Ext. 3745
Fax 410-841-3387 · 301-858-3387
Malcolm.Augustine@senate.state.md.us

February 18, 2025

The Honorable Pamela G. Beidle
Chairwoman, Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SB589 – Opioid Restitution Fund – Interactive Dashboard

Position: **Favorable**

Chair Beidle and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present Senate Bill 589, which strengthens transparency and accountability in Maryland's use of opioid settlement funds. This bill ensures that the public has clear, comprehensive, and real-time access to information on how these funds are allocated and utilized through an interactive dashboard, building on an existing platform already maintained by the state.

Maryland currently operates the Overdose Data Dashboard¹ through the Maryland Office of Overdose Response, which tracks overdose trends, treatment outcomes, and related data. This existing infrastructure provides a valuable opportunity to seamlessly integrate opioid restitution fund tracking. By leveraging this proven platform, Senate Bill 589 builds on established systems to strengthen public accountability and support data-driven decision-making.

The Problem – A Lack of Transparency in Opioid Settlement Spending

Maryland, like many states, is receiving substantial settlement funds from opioid manufacturers and distributors to address the devastating impact of the opioid crisis. Funds deposited in the Opioid Restitution Fund (ORF) are managed at the state level for opioid abatement initiatives, while local jurisdictions receive direct payments not allocated through the ORF.²

¹ <https://health.maryland.gov/dataoffice/Pages/mdh-dashboards.aspx>

² <https://stopoverdose.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/34/2024/11/Revised-FY-2024-State-Finance-and-Procurement-Article-%C2%A7-7%E2%80%933331-%E2%80%9494-Opioid-Restitution-Fund-Expenditure-Report-MSAR-14240.pdf>

As of the end of FY 2024, Maryland has cumulatively received \$201.2 million, with \$158.4 million deposited into the ORF and \$42.8 million distributed directly to local jurisdictions.³ Although the Governor submits an annual expenditure report to the Legislature on ORF spending⁴, Maryland has yet to ensure that this information is easily accessible to the public beyond the formal reporting process⁵.

Local jurisdictions have discretion over how to use their \$42.8 million in direct payments provided they follow state guidelines. However, they are not required to publicly report how these funds are allocated beyond compliance with state audits⁶. Without standardized, real-time public reporting, it is difficult to assess whether these funds are being used effectively and equitably to address the opioid crisis. This gap in oversight raises concerns about potential inconsistencies in local spending, delayed interventions, and missed opportunities to address urgent needs in the opioid crisis.

The Information Gap

Several states, including Massachusetts⁷, North Carolina⁸, Delaware⁹, New York¹⁰, and Florida¹¹, have already taken steps to enhance transparency and accountability in opioid settlement fund spending by establishing interactive public dashboards that track how these funds are allocated.

Unlike these states, Maryland lacks a centralized, interactive system to provide clear, up-to-date information on opioid settlement spending. In fact, in December 2024, the Maryland Office of Overdose Response issued its report¹² on “Opioid Restitution Fund Public Reporting Recommendations,” explicitly recognizing this gap and recommending the need to “explore creating an interactive dashboard.” The report further states:

Admittedly, Maryland’s processes for sharing this information [on prescription opioid-related settlement funds] are less sophisticated than other states and could be improved to increase transparency and public accessibility. For example, Maryland’s current reporting

³ <https://stopoverdose.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/34/2024/11/Revised-FY-2024-State-Finance-and-Procurement-Article-%C2%A7-7%E2%80%93331-%E2%80%9494-Opioid-Restitution-Fund-Expenditure-Report-MSAR-14240.pdf>

⁴ State Finance and Procurement Article § 7–331 (Chapter 537 of the Acts of 2019) and in accordance with § 2–1257 of the State Government Article

⁵ <https://www.opioidsettlementguides.com/maryland>

⁶ <https://www.opioidsettlementguides.com/maryland>

⁷ Massachusetts Statewide Opioid Settlements Municipal Dashboard. <https://caremass.org/data-dashboard/>

⁸ CORE-NC: Community Opioid Resources Engine for North Carolina. <https://ncopioidsettlement.org/data-dashboards/>

⁹ The Delaware Prescription Opioid Settlement Tracker

<https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoieZjdNTUzMzktN2ZmOC00YmI3LWJjN2UtYmY3NmYyMzdldDQwIiwidCI6IjhjMDIiNTY5LTUxYzUtNGRlZS1hYmlyLThiOTljMzJhNDM5NiJ9>

¹⁰ New York State Opioid Settlement Fund Tracker. <https://oasas.ny.gov/fy-2023-opioid-settlement-fund-initiatives>

¹¹ Florida Opioid Settlement Portal.

<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/publish?EQBCT=ff1143317c264ed9be332f9051fb5a53>

¹² <https://stopoverdose.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/34/2024/12/Public-Reporting-Recommendations-for-Opioid-Restitution-Fund-Expenditures.pdf>

framework does not use an interactive dashboard, which, if implemented, could facilitate access to this vital information.

Without a centralized, real-time tracking tool, policymakers and the public cannot monitor whether funds are being used effectively, which undermines accountability and trust. By establishing a user-friendly, real-time dashboard, Maryland can ensure that opioid settlement funds are managed transparently, efficiently, and in alignment with their intended purpose.

What SB589 Does – A Public, Interactive Dashboard

SB589 includes the following requirements, effective October 1, 2025.

- The Maryland Office of Overdose Response, in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Health, must develop and maintain an interactive dashboard that publicly shares information on ORF spending.
- The dashboard must be developed and maintained using funds from the ORF, appropriated through the state budget.
- The dashboard (disaggregated by state, county, and municipality) must include
 - Payment schedule information, including estimated payments from opioid settlements.
 - Past spending of settlement funds.
 - Planned spending priorities.
 - Details on funded initiatives, including performance measures when applicable.
 - Information on public hearings related to the use of settlement funds.
- Counties and municipalities receiving opioid settlement funds must provide financial information to the Department for inclusion in the dashboard. The Department must establish an online portal for reporting or uploading the required data.
- The dashboard should leverage existing platforms that already provide data on opioid use and overdoses in the state where practicable.

Why SB589 is Critical to Maryland's Opioid Response

By following the lead of these states and passing SB589, Maryland's publicly accessible dashboard will empower communities and policymakers by providing clear data on fund allocation and impact. Making this information available to the public will:

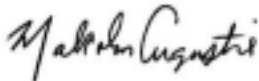
- Track how counties and municipalities use opioid funds to ensure alignment with settlement agreements and state requirements.
- Identify best practices and successful programs that can be expanded statewide to maximize impact.
- Hold decision-makers accountable by ensuring funds go where they are needed most to prevent misuse or inefficiencies.
- Provide data-driven insights to support ongoing policymaking and funding decisions.
- Engage the public and stakeholders by increasing transparency and fostering community involvement in opioid response strategies.

Conclusion

As stated above, Maryland already maintains an opioid data dashboard through the Maryland Office of Overdose Response, which tracks overdose trends and treatment data. My office has engaged with the Maryland Office of Overdose Response and the Maryland Department of Health, **both of which have confirmed that opioid settlement funding data can be integrated into this existing system.** The necessary infrastructure is in place, the technical capacity exists, and the agencies responsible for implementation are prepared to carry out this task, which allows Maryland to provide real-time public oversight of these critical funds without delay.

Moreover, the estimated \$80,000 needed to develop and maintain the dashboard is already available through the Opioid Restitution Fund, which makes this a fiscally responsible, high-impact initiative that strengthens transparency and accountability in Maryland's opioid response efforts.

Chair Beidle and members of the committee, I urge you to issue a favorable report on SB589. Maryland has an unprecedented opportunity to set a national standard for transparency in opioid settlement fund spending. By implementing a public, interactive dashboard, we can ensure every dollar is used efficiently to address the opioid crisis, provide life-saving treatment, and rebuild affected communities.



Sincerely, Senator Malcolm Augustine
President Pro Tempore -- District 47 -- Prince George's County