

February 4, 2025

The Honorable Senator Pamela Beidle
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SUPPORT of Senate Bill 0083
(Public Health – Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program) - FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Beidle and Senate Finance Committee Members,

My name is Candy Kerr and I am writing to support Senate Bill 0083 “Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program”. SB0083 will allow community based organizations to establish overdose prevention programs to reduce overdose deaths, which continue to occur at alarming levels in Maryland.

Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition is a prominent harm reduction organization in the city and state of Maryland. We devote our time and energy to helping people who use drugs be safe and the passage of this bill is another way to increase people's safety.

Between December 2023 and November 2024, we lost 1,689 Marylanders to fatal overdoses. We urge the Maryland General Assembly to authorize overdose and infectious disease prevention services, an intervention proven for over 35 years of research to decrease overdose deaths. The proposed Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program mirrors the 200 evidence-based public health interventions already established across the world in 14 countries, including two in the United States. Trained personnel monitor participants for signs of overdose and intervene to prevent or reverse overdoses. In addition to overdose prevention services, OPCs provide a welcoming space that helps bring drug use indoors and connect people to long-term, life-sustaining resources, like addiction services and social supports, including voluntary treatment.

This is an emergency and we urge you to act now. We ask that the Senate Finance Committee give SB0083 a favorable report.

For more information about Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition or this position, please contact Candy Kerr at candy@baltimoreharmreduction.org