

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 Rajani Gudlavalleti, I am a Baltimore City resident homeowner with almost twenty years experience in harm reduction policy and programming, racial justice advocacy, and organizational capacity building. 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.

Ten years ago, I served as the initial Director of Overdose Prevention and Response for the Baltimore City Health Department, hired by then-newly appointed Health Commissioner Dr. Leana Wen. Baltimore’s overdose crisis had reached a turning point as our neighbors continued to experience significant pain and hardship, and unregulated fentanyl became more easily accessible. I have since worked to curb the rising overdose epidemic in Maryland from multiple angles - within public policy, public health research, and community organizing. I lost friends, colleagues and mentors to overdose along the way. Witnessed devastating grief. Made passionate appeals to my elected officials for immediate change.

Currently I serve as a policy consultant to national leaders in overdose prevention efforts. At the national level and across states, we are bracing for roll-backs on access to now-established overdose prevention tools such as naloxone and syringe services. This will only result in more death and devastation. Maryland can protect its most vulnerable residents by allowing community-based organizations to bring people inside existing centers, where trained professionals can observe and respond with available resources, referrals, and compassion.

Between December 2023 and November 2024 alone, we lost 1,689 Marylanders to fatal overdoses. Overdose Prevention Centers offer the most feasible, immediate opportunity to address this crisis. They are a necessity for the success of Maryland’s continuum of care, with over 35 years of research demonstrating community-level impacts on decreased 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 three in the United States.

**This is an emergency. I urge the Senate Finance Committee to give SB 0083 a favorable report.**

For more information about my position, I can be reached at [rajani.gudlavalleti@gmail.com](mailto:rajani.gudlavalleti@gmail.com).

Sincerely,  
Rajani Gudlavalleti

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