



SB-83 Public Health - Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program

Committee: Finance

Date: 1/31/25

Position: Fav

The Maryland Coalition of Families: Maryland Coalition of Families (MCF) is a statewide nonprofit organization that provides family peer support services at no cost to families who have a loved one with a mental health, substance use, or problem gambling disorder. Using their personal experience as parents, caregivers and other loved ones, our staff provide emotional support, resource connection and systems navigation as well as support groups and educational trainings and workshops.

Last year we served nearly 5,000 Families of a loved one with a behavioral health need. 15% of those families have a loved one with substance use and co-occurring disorders. We support this bill for the following reasons.

- The cost of losing a loved one to an overdose is insurmountable and unmeasurable. An overdose prevention site can be lifesaving and would provide a safe space with support and resources. Overdose numbers are not just numbers. They are fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, friends, and more. Overdose deaths affect all systems, not just family systems.
- Safe consumption sites are already prevalent and profitable businesses often referred to as bars or nightclubs. Alcohol consumption, both social and problematic, has been part of human culture since the discovery of fermentation. As a society, we support and promote this norm through our patronage of restaurants, bars, clubs, and other venues serving alcohol. Yet, we condemn extending such tolerance to those who use drugs. Individuals, including adolescents and young adults, will engage in these behaviors regardless of safety mechanisms. Providing safety to people who use drugs is an act of unconditional love.



- Safe consumption sites not only significantly reduce overdose rates but also help prevent other violent crimes. By providing a secure environment for individuals under the influence, these sites reduce the likelihood of a violent crime an individual may experience elsewhere. For example, utilizing a safe consumption space lowers the risk of someone being sexually or physically assaulted while under the influence.
- These sites also help to reduce the risk of spreading infectious diseases by providing sterile equipment and a safe clean space to consume.
- Connecting with individuals and meeting them where they are can profoundly impact their lives. Safe consumption sites provide an environment where individuals may eventually take their first step towards recovery. Support in these settings acts as a protective factor.

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