

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 Corey Bryce; I am a lifelong resident of Maryland and a Certified Peer Recovery Specialist, as well as a Social Work student at UMBC. I write not only as an individual with professional experience working with people who use drugs (PWUD), but as a person who has lived experience with my own chaotic substance use and recovery. 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.

In the final years of my active drug use, I was an intravenous, polysubstance user in a suburban area of Western Maryland. I never knew exactly what was in the drugs I bought, or what constituted a fatal amount, so trying to reduce the risk of accidental overdose was like flying blind or playing Russian roulette – especially amidst a surge of fentanyl in the drug supply. I used with my partner at the time, so part of our risk protection was simply having someone else in the room who was looking out for us and there to administer first aid. We did not want to die. When the pharmacies in our area would not sell us syringes, we shared used syringes, possibly with others we used with as well. I contracted the bloodborne Hepatitis C virus, which I would not find out until I had been in recovery for 5 years.

In 2018, overdose deaths were higher than they had ever been in Maryland. One by one, we heard about our friends dying. When I went to treatment and subsequently moved into recovery housing that summer, my partner continued to use – alone. Five months later, on the morning of January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019, his aunt found him, dead for hours from an accidental fentanyl overdose, just days before a bed in a treatment center opened up for him. The depth of that devastating loss to myself, his family, and our friends cannot be sufficiently expressed in words.

The overdose crisis is a critical public health issue that we Marylanders have a duty to address on the state level. Between December 2023 and November 2024, we lost 1,689 Marylanders to fatal overdoses. I 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. A program like this would have been a life raft in more ways than one for my partner and myself had we been able to access it.

I know that cost-effective health care solutions are one of your top priorities, and SB0083 offers a sensible public health approach that values human life and safety. OPCs would have dramatic cost-saving benefits for all Marylanders in addition to health benefits for PWUD. In 2017, the total cost of fatal overdoses in Maryland was estimated to be more than \$22.9 billion (Luo et al., 2021). Each OPC would reduce fatal overdoses, ambulance rides, emergency department visits, and hospitalization costs to the point that it pays for its own operation, and then some (Ambrecht et al., 2021).

Together we must honor the humanity of PWUD in Maryland and preserve lives in our great state. I ask that the Senate Finance Committee give SB0083 a favorable report. Thank you for your time and service.

Sincerely,

Corey Bryce, CPRS  
corellbry@gmail.com

## References

- Ambrecht, E., Guzauskas, G., Hansen, R., Pandey, R., Fazioli, K., Chapman, R., Pearson, S. D., Rind, D.M. (2021). *Supervised injection facilities and other supervised consumption sites: Effectiveness and value*. Institute for Clinical and Economic Review.  
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- Luo, F., Li, M., Florence, C. (2021). State-level economic costs of opioid use disorder and fatal opioid overdose - United States, 2017. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 70(15), 541–546. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7015a1>