

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 Darci Curwen-Garber 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.

I have a Masters in Public Health from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and have worked in public health and social services for over a decade - this includes at local and state health departments, community medical clinics, homeless shelters, and now at a syringe services program (SSP) in Baltimore.

As an outreach service provider at an SSP, I have the privilege of engaging with hundreds of Marylanders every week who use our services to protect themselves and loved ones from HIV and Hepatitis C transmission, soft tissues wounds, overdose, and death. Our SSP services help Marylanders to protect themselves before and after they use drugs, but there is *no one* legally allowed to support Marylanders when it's most critical and most dangerous - at the moment they're using drugs. **In Maryland, we continue to fall short.**

From my experience, the desires of people who use drugs and the greater Maryland community are very similar. Greater Maryland says, “We don't want public drug use. We don't want syringe litter.” People who use drugs don't want to use drugs in alleyways or in abandoned buildings, nor fear being arrested for paraphernalia. **OPS's provide a safe indoor space with sterile equipment.** Greater Maryland says, “We don't want our loved one overdosing.” People who use drugs have lost *the most* loved ones to overdose. **OPS's safe lives.**

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 Darci Curwen-Garber at darci@baltimoreharmreduction.org.

Sincerely,

Darci Curwen-Garber