

February 26, 2025

The Honorable Chair Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk
Chairman, Health Government and Operations Committee
Room 240 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SUPPORT of House Bill 845

(Public Health – Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program) - FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and members of the Health Government and Operations Committee,

I, Ian Bravo, am writing to support House Bill 845 “Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program”. HB845 will allow community based organizations to establish overdose prevention programs to reduce overdose deaths, which continue to occur at alarming levels in Maryland.

It is a shame that many people die of fatal overdose before they have the chance to seek help and recover from their addiction. I have seen needles strewn about in public parks, because the people using them don’t have a sterile or sanitary place to dispose of or obtain their sharps. I have encountered people using drugs in residential alleyways in search of a secluded area away from police or the public eye. OPC’s provide an opportunity to reduce the amount of public drug use- the same public drug use that leaves its trace on our buses, our parks, and our communities.

Overdose is preventable, avoidable, and reversible. Everyone should have the opportunity to recover from addiction. This is only possible if they are alive long enough to receive help.

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 Health Government and Operations Committee give HB845 a favorable report.**

For more information about this position, please contact Ian Bravo at sjmbravo@gmail.com