

February 24, 2025

The Honorable Chair Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk
Chair, 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 am writing as a public health professional, parent, and resident of Baltimore City to support House Bill 845, “Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program.” HB845 will allow community-based organizations to establish overdose prevention sites to reduce overdose deaths, which continue to occur at alarming levels in Maryland.

In over a decade of public health work, I have witnessed firsthand the power of meeting people where they are and leading with love. Overdose prevention sites do just that. I want my friends, neighbors, and family members who use drugs to be met with the care and resources that overdose prevention sites provide.

Between December 2023 and November 2024, we lost 1,689 Marylanders to fatal overdoses. I urge the Maryland General Assembly to authorize overdose prevention sites, an intervention proven for over 35 years 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. At overdose prevention sites, trained personnel monitor participants for signs of overdose and intervene to prevent or reverse overdoses. In addition to overdose prevention services, overdose prevention sites 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 I urge you to act now. I ask that the Health Government and Operations Committee give HB845 a favorable report.

Many thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emily Heinlein', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Emily Heinlein, MPH