



MDDCSAM is the Maryland state chapter of the American Society of Addiction Medicine whose members are physicians and other health providers who treat people with substance use disorders.

HB 798 Opioid Restitution Fund - Interactive Dashboard.
Health & Government Operations Committee Hearing Feb 19, 2025

FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and members of the committee,

Around the country, the potential for mis-use of ORF funds, or simply using them to supplant existing funds is a huge issue, related to a lack of transparency.

“There are worryingly few rules for state or local governments to report how they spend any of the money. . . **Shockingly, most opioid settlement agreements do not require states and localities to report their opioid remediation expenditures to the public.**”

Christine Minhee, JD., founder of www.opioidsettlementtracker.com,

“Public reporting of the settlement expenditures is not required by the settlements themselves, so we’re in wild west territory. **“Without full transparency, states will be unable to meaningfully evaluate or modify spending over the 15 – 18 years that these funds will be dispersed, and there are a great many ways that funds could be used ineffectively.”**

Christine Minhee, JD., founder of www.opioidsettlementtracker.com,

As of January 31, 2024, 18 states have reported or will report 100% of their opioid settlement spend to the public: AZ, CO, CT, DE, FL, ID, IN, MA, MI, MO, NH, NJ, NC, OR, SC, SD, UT, WA

Maryland is not among them. www.opioidsettlementtracker.com/publicreporting

“The opportunity for trouble is massive with \$50 billion. Is it cronyism? Is it waste, fraud & abuse? Because you can’t look at it. It’s all back door secret stuff, and that’s scary.”

Jonathan Stoltman, Executive Director, Opioid Policy Institute (<https://opioidpolicy.org>)

“Regarding opioid settlement funds, “In New York State, once that money started rolling in, public health advocates were shocked at where most of it seemed to be going.”

Last Week Tonight with John Oliver - Opioid Settlements May 16, 2024
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Io0yuH1CiA0> at 7:50

“21 million dollars went into New York’s General Fund, to fill budget gaps, and that’s absolutely inexcusable.”

Dr. Jeffrey Reynolds, Family and Children’s Association; IBID Last Week Tonight at 8:07

“As state and local governments begin spending billions in opioid settlement funds, **one of the loudest, most frequent questions from the public has been: Where are the dollars going?** Victims of the crisis, advocates, and public policy experts have repeatedly called on governments to transparently report how they’re using these funds

“When jurisdictions don’t publicly report their spending — or publish without meaningful details — **the public is robbed of an opportunity to hold elected officials accountable.** People need to see the names of organizations receiving the money and descriptions of their work to ensure projects are not replacing existing funding streams to save money.”

from KFF Health News November 7, 2024
<https://www.npr.org/sections/shots-health-news/2024/11/06/nx-s1-5182304/transparency-accountability-opioid-settlement-funds>

Baltimore City established a required Transparency & Accountability Plan in August 2024, as part of the framework for the administration of opioid restitution funds in Baltimore

City of Baltimore Opioid Restitution Fund Transparency & Accountability Plan
https://www.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/opioid_transparency_accountability_plan.p#:~:text=The%20Principles%20for%20the%20Use.use%20of%20opioid%20settlement%20funds

We urge a favorable report.

Respectfully, Joseph A. Adams, MD, FASAM

The Maryland-DC Society of Addiction Medicine

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