

MARYLAND PSYCHIATRIC SOCIETY



January 28, 2025

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The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk
Chair, Health Government Operations Committee
241 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support – HB 845: Public Health - Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program

Dear Chairwoman Pena-Melnyk and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) and the Washington Psychiatric Society (WPS) are state medical organizations whose physician members specialize in diagnosing, treating, and preventing mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Formed more than sixty-five years ago to support the needs of psychiatrists and their patients, both organizations work to ensure available, accessible, and comprehensive quality mental health resources for all Maryland citizens; and strive through public education to dispel the stigma and discrimination of those suffering from a mental illness. As the district branches of the American Psychiatric Association covering the state of Maryland, MPS and WPS represent over 1100 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

MPS/WPS strongly support House Bill 845: Public Health – Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program as community-based organizations can play a critical role in overdose prevention. In addition, these organizations are often well-positioned to provide harm reduction services and support to individuals who use drugs, including those at risk of overdose.

Community-based organizations can provide a range of services related to overdose prevention, such as:

1. Distributing naloxone: Naloxone is a medication that can reverse an opioid overdose. Community based organizations can provide naloxone and train individuals to use it effectively.
2. Providing education and outreach: Community-based organizations can educate individuals on overdose risks and provide information on reducing the harm associated with drug use.
3. Creating safe consumption spaces: Community-based organizations can create safe spaces for individuals to use drugs to be monitored and supported in case of overdose.
4. Providing syringe exchange services to limit the spread of infectious diseases related to intravenous drug use.
5. Offering counseling and support: Community-based organizations can offer counseling and support to individuals who use drugs, including those who have experienced an overdose.
6. Advocating for policy change: Community-based organizations can advocate for policies that support overdose prevention, such as increasing access to naloxone and funding harm reduction programs.

As such, MPS and WPS ask the committee for a favorable report on HB845. If you have any questions regarding this testimony, please contact Lisa Harris Jones at lisa.jones@mdlobbyist.com.

Respectfully submitted,
The Maryland Psychiatric Society and the Washington Psychiatric Society
Legislative Action Committee