

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,

My name is Jennifer Alice Thompson and I 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.

Being able to offer or refer to overdose prevention sites would benefit my community and the most vulnerable members of our state. Substance use disorder is a critical issue in Maryland and policies need to reflect the needs of those most impacted by this disease. As someone who has lost more than one family member and friends to overdose, I wish this had been in place when my loved ones were struggling with their disease.

And I am not alone in losing those I loved. Between December 2023 and November 2024, 1,689 Marylanders died due to fatal overdoses. I 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.

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. It is about time Maryland started to treat these people with the respect and dignity they deserve instead of trying to ignore the reality of these individual’s lives.

This is an emergency and we urge you to act now. I ask that the Health Government and

Operations Committee give HB845 a favorable report.

Warm regards,

J. Alice Thompson