



## House Health and Government Operations Committee

### HB-845 Public Health - Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program

February 26, 2025

Position: Fav

**The Maryland Coalition of Families:** Maryland Coalition of Families (MCF) is a statewide nonprofit organization that provides family peer support services at no cost to families who have a loved one with a mental health, substance use, or problem gambling disorder. Using their personal experience as parents, caregivers and other loved ones, our staff provide emotional support, resource connection and systems navigation as well as support groups and educational trainings and workshops.

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Last year, we served nearly 5,000 families, and 15% of those families have a loved one with substance use and co-occurring disorders. We support this bill for the following reasons.

The cost of losing a loved one to an overdose is insurmountable and unmeasurable. An overdose prevention site can be lifesaving and would provide a safe space with support and resources. Overdose numbers are not just numbers; they are family members, friends, and more. Overdose deaths affect all systems, not just family systems.

Safe consumption sites not only significantly reduce overdose rates but also help prevent other violent crimes. By providing a secure environment for individuals under the influence, these sites reduce the likelihood of a violent crime an individual may experience elsewhere. For example, utilizing a safe consumption space lowers the risk of someone being sexually or physically assaulted while under the influence.

These sites also help to reduce the risk of spreading infectious diseases by providing sterile equipment and a safe, clean space to consume. They also provide education on risks and safe practices, resources for treatment, and more.



Connecting with individuals and meeting them where they are can profoundly impact their lives. A safe consumption site may be an individual's first step toward recovery, and support in these settings is a protective factor.

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