

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

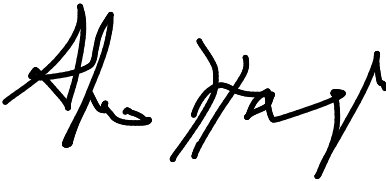
Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and members of the Health Government and Operations Committee,

My name is Alex Haraseyko, I am a Maryland resident, 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.

Addiction is a disease, not a choice. It is shameful to allow our residents to die unnecessarily because some forms of substance use are stigmatized and others are not. These deaths reverberate throughout families and communities regardless of any one individual’s drug use. In addition to reducing the number of fatal overdose deaths – already enough of a reason to support this bill – overdose prevention centers would reduce the secondary trauma to bystanders who regularly interact with the public, such as food service workers and librarians.

I have no formal medical training, yet as a cyclist I carry naloxone when I move around my city due to the number of times I have encountered someone who may need it. The burden to save lives should not be placed on untrained members of the general public – as it is now – when there are so many trained professionals desperate to help. It is time we accept that people use drugs, and that this fact alone should not be a death sentence.

Between December 2023 and November 2024, we lost 1,689 Marylanders to fatal overdoses. We 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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alex Haraseyko". The signature is stylized with a large initial "A" and a long, sweeping underline.

Trained personnel monitor participants for signs of overdose and intervene to prevent or reverse overdoses. 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.**

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.**