

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 Hyun Dunn and I work for Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition 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.

I currently work for Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition and we are a Syringe Service Program. This work has shown me the benefits of supplying people with sterile supplies for their drug use, while also providing them with a level of care and safety while dramatically reducing the spread of infectious diseases. Through years and years of research we know globally that Overdose Prevention Centers work and continue to do so. These are safer places for people to be treated like humans and provide access to other wrap around services for their own health and wellbeing. Having a dedicated space for people to use substances means they don't have to use them in the streets, alleys, and abandoned buildings.

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. 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. We ask that the Health Government and Operations Committee give HB845 a favorable report.

For more information about Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition and my position please contact me at hyukyudunn@gmail.com.