



Date: February 24, 2025

Hearing Date: February 26, 2025

Committee: Heath & Government Operations

Bill: HB 0845 Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program

Position: In Favor and Request Favorable Report

Submitted by:

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Our organization:

The Brain Injury Association of Maryland (BIAMD) is a 42-year-old organization providing education, advocacy, and research. We operate an information & assistance hotline, work with over 100 clients in case management, host a yearly conference on brain injury, and advocate for policies that improve the life of Marylander's living with Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI) and Acquired Brain Injuries (ABI). We are writing in FAVOR of this bill.

Rationale:

My name is Ruth Carlock from The Brain Injury Association of Maryland, who is the voice of those affected by brain injury through advocacy, education, and research. Traumatic Brain Injuries, including those resulting from overdoses, represent a significant public health concern. Substance use disorders can lead to overdoses that deprive the brain of oxygen resulting in lasting cognitive, physical, and emotional impairments. Research highlights the correlation between substance abuse, overdose incidents, and the risk of acquiring traumatic, anoxic, and hypoxic brain injuries.

With a favorable report on this bill, this Committee will have a unique opportunity to both save money and, more importantly, save lives. One analysis of Maryland's health data predicted that a single Overdose Prevention site would generate 7.8 Million dollars in savings for every 1.8 Million Spent. With the main savings coming from preventing over a hundred overdose related ambulance calls, 78 emergency room visits, and bringing an additional 121 people into treatment every year, per cite. Although it should be noted that these numbers would all be an undercount in comparison to similar sites in New

York and the fact that the \$7.8 Million in savings comes from analyzing how much these services cost in 2016. Given the increase in pricing for these services and the increased need for services, the State of Maryland should be able to expect more savings. This data also does not, however, reflect the increase in brain injury treatment costs for the state.

The Brain Injury Association of America highlights the severe risk of brain injuries during nonfatal opioid overdoses, emphasizing that opioids can depress the central nervous system to the point of reducing or stopping breathing. The connection between substance misuse and brain injury is strong, with a notable proportion of individuals in acute rehabilitation for brain injury being there due to drug or alcohol use. Moreover, individuals with a history of substance misuse are significantly more likely to experience brain injury, underscoring the intertwined nature of these issues.

Researchers in Canada found that individuals who had experienced an overdose were over 15 times more likely to suffer a brain injury compared to those who had not. This study underscores the importance of Overdose Prevention Sites in not only reversing overdose events but also in potentially reducing the incidence of subsequent brain injuries among drug users. The findings suggest a critical need for programs and services that offer person-centered, harm reduction-oriented support, highlighting the need for increased awareness, screening, and care for this vulnerable population.

House Bill HB0845 addresses a critical component of brain injury prevention for individuals with substance use disorders. These programs not only offer life-saving interventions in the event of an overdose but also connect individuals with vital resources for recovery and rehabilitation, potentially reducing the long-term impact of brain injuries. We urge the committee render a favorable report and thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

We respectfully request that this Committee issue a Favorable Report on this bill.

Resources:

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2826208?resultClick=1>

<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2022/01/special-telehealth-worth>

https://mhcc.maryland.gov/mhcc/pages/hit/hit_telemedicine/documents/telehealth_rec_pt_sum.pdf