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Health and Government Operations  
Committee  
Subcommittees

Health Occupations and Long-Term Care

Public Health and  
Minority Health Disparities

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
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**HB737 - Public Health - Nonopioid Advance Directives**

Madame Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 737.

Opioids serve critical medical purposes for pain management, but widespread prescription is a contributing factor to addiction rates. According to the American Medical Association (AMA) up to 19% of people who take prescription opioids for pain management develop an addiction<sup>1</sup>. For this reason, it is imperative that individuals have the autonomy to make informed decisions about their care, particularly when it comes to the use of opioids. In many treatment plans, opioids are not the only option available for pain management; those who would rather not use opioids for pain medication often have a variety of choices to consider. This choice is a benefit to people who would rather not be prescribed opioids, and especially important for individuals recovering from addiction.

HB737 protects patient choice by allowing an individual to make an advance directive to refuse opioid medications in favor of non-opioid pain management if the option is available. This option will allow individuals to plan their treatment around their preference for opioid pain management: in the event that a patient is unable to articulate a desire to exhaust nonopioid options for treatment before being prescribed opioids, an advance directive will allow them to alert providers of that preference. HB737 aligns with Maryland's efforts to combat the opioid crisis by giving individuals more control over their healthcare choices and promoting equally safe, non-addictive pain relief alternatives. With this option, patients will be empowered to make choices in line with their personal values and preferences.

This initiative offers another method of reducing opioid prescriptions, and strengthens the role of patient autonomy in healthcare decisions. By fostering broader availability of non-opioid options, the bill aligns with public health goals and enhances healthcare quality in the state. HB737 is an important step in addressing the opioid crisis by prioritizing patient choice, and ensuring a future where patients can make informed decisions about their treatment options. I respectfully ask for a favorable report on HB737.

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<sup>1</sup> AMA Alliance. Prescription Opioid Epidemic: Know the Facts. <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/opioid-use-disorder#:~:text=Access%20to%20prescription%20opioids%20and,develop%20an%20addiction%20to%20them.>