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Support House Bill 845

Public Health – Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention

House Health & Government Operations Committee

February 26, 2025

The Maryland Association for the Treatment of Opioid Dependence (MATOD), a statewide organization representing over sixty-five healthcare organizations throughout the state promoting high-quality, effective medications for opioid use disorders is pleased to provide support for House Bill 845. This legislation will allow jurisdictions to develop Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention programs to reduce fatal and non-fatal overdoses, and provide a pathway for people toward needed health care.

Maryland's "all hands on deck" and "all tools in the toolbox" approach has effectively saved lives with harm reduction efforts of increased naloxone distribution and syringe exchange services; increased access and availability to evidenced-based medication assisted treatment with methadone and buprenorphine; greater implementation of peer recovery specialists in medical and community settings; and creative jurisdictional Opioid Intervention Teams across the state. More is urgently needed, however, in order to save lives and change the trajectory of the continued opioid crisis.

Substance use disorder treatment is only be effective when and if it is received. The U.S. Surgeon General's 2016 "Facing Addiction" report noted that "only 1 in 10 people with a substance use disorder receive any type of substance use treatment." House Bill 845 can provide life-saving services for those 90% of Marylanders with the manageable disease of addiction who are not yet engaged in treatment.

The proposed Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program is based on similar programs operating in more than sixty (60) cities in ten (10) countries, and most notably in New York City. The results and evidence from these successful harm-reduction facilities is unequivocal – they reduce overdose deaths, provide an entry into treatment, reduce public use and publicly discarded syringes, significantly reduce first responder and hospital emergency department visits, and they do not encourage or increase additional drug use or crime.

Maryland needs to add this tool in the great work being done to reduce overdose deaths and improve access to needed health care.

MATOD urges a favorable report on House Bill 845.

MATOD members include community and hospital based Opioid Treatment Programs, local Health Departments, local Addiction and Behavioral Health Authorities and Maryland organizations that support evidence-based Medication Assisted Treatment. MATOD members include thousands of highly trained and dedicated addiction counselors, clinical social workers, physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nurses, peer recovery specialists and dedicated staff who work every day to save and transform lives.