

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 Erin Miles Cloud. I am a Baltimore City resident, mother of two children and niece to a beautiful woman who died of a preventable overdose. I am also a civil rights attorney, and current Board Member of Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition. It is without hesitation that I ask you all to support support House Bill 845 “Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program”.

For approximately 20 years I have been organizing, and advocating for people who use drugs not just because it is good policy, but because I care about the health and well being of my friends, families and neighbors who use drugs. Professionally I work at the intersection of child welfare and harm reduction. I have worked for decades with mothers who use drugs, who need support and not punishment. Countless studies show that child separation only increases the risk of overdose in mothers. Instead of investing in child separations, we need to be investing in community interventions to reduce the impact of the war on drugs on our children and families. I am confident that if more support was given to my Aunt, she would be alive today. My cousins– her children– lost their mother and we need not put any more children through that pain. 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.

Erin Miles Cloud
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