



House Bill 729

Public Health - Use of Opioid Restitution Fund and Training Under the Overdose Response Program

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
WITH AMENDMENTS

To: Health and Government Operations
Committee

Date: February 19, 2025

From: Karrington Anderson

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS HB 729 WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill makes necessary improvements to the existing framework governing the use of Opioid Restitution Fund (ORF) dollars, expanding the range of allowable uses to better align with the National Settlement Agreement.

Under current law, these funds are restricted to a specific list of activities outlined in §7-331 of the State Finance and Procurement Article, which predates the final terms of the National Settlement Agreement. HB 729 would modernize the law to ensure local governments have the flexibility needed to address the opioid crisis comprehensively and effectively.

MACo strongly supports the bill's intent to repeal the outdated statutory list and replace it with language referencing the National Settlement Agreement, which provides a broader and more adaptable framework for deploying settlement funds. This change acknowledges that opioid-related harm reduction and response efforts continue to evolve, and counties require a wider range of eligible expenditures to meet the unique needs of their communities.

Counties and Local Health Departments serve as the front-line responders to the opioid epidemic, using settlement funds to expand public health and safety interventions. Counties recommend some clarifying amendments to ensure that the expanded list of eligible uses is truly inclusive of the National Settlement Agreement's Appendix E, ensuring counties have full access to resources for innovative and effective programs.

These changes will provide local governments with the tools and flexibility necessary to combat the ongoing opioid crisis while remaining accountable to the public and aligned with national best practices. For these reasons, MACo urges the Committee to give HB 729 a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report. MACo's proposed amendments are included on the following page.

MACo Proposed Amendments to HB 729

- On page 3, in lines 19-20, strike “that have the purpose of”
- On page 3, in lines 21 through 30, strike beginning with “(i)” down through “administrative expenses” in line 30.