

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 Rachel Luce, I am a services manager at Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition, and I am in full support of House Bill 845 “Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program”. HB845 will allow community based organizations to establish overdose prevention programs to reduce overdose deaths, which continue to occur at alarming levels in Maryland.

Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition is a Maryland authorized syringe service program and overdose education and naloxone distribution program. I engage with hundreds of your constituents every week who utilize our services for themselves, their loved ones, or their neighbors. Last year, while conducting our annual satisfaction survey, we included questions about overdose prevention centers. Our responses came from both people who use drugs and those who don't, and people were overwhelmingly in support of having an overdose prevention center in their neighborhood because of the supportive services and safety it would offer to the community.

Between December 2023 and November 2024, we lost 1,689 Marylanders to fatal overdoses. 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.**

For more information about my work at Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition, my favorable position, or the support of overdose prevention centers from my clients and your constituents, please contact me at [rachel@baltimoreharmreduction.org](mailto:rachel@baltimoreharmreduction.org).

Thank you for your consideration,

Rachel