



**2025 SESSION
POSITION PAPER**

BILL: **HB 729 - Public Health - Use of Opioid Restitution Fund and Training Under the Overdose Response Program**

COMMITTEE: **House – Health and Government Operations Committee**

POSITION: **Letter of Support With Amendments**

BILL ANALYSIS: **HB 729 amends § 13-3103 of the Health-General Article to require that training on opioid overdose response emphasize restoration of breathing, avoiding withdrawal, and compassionate post overdose support and care. The bill would also amend § 7-331 of the State Finance and Procurement Article to align the existing statute with settlement agreements and judgments in state claims against opioid manufacturers and other parties and alter authorized uses of the Opioid Restitution Fund to include addressing racial disparities in access to services.**

POSITION RATIONALE: The Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO) respectfully submits this Letter of Support With Amendments for HB 729. The proposed bill includes important changes to the allowable uses of the ORF to bring the statute into alignment with the national settlement agreement, provides additional flexibility to local jurisdictions in the use of these funds, while also ensuring that funds are allocated to services and programs that are evidence-based or evidence-informed. 7-331 was passed prior to the finalization of the various opioid settlement agreements and the proposed bill will update the statutory language to reflect currently allowable costs. In addition to the changes proposed by the bill, MACHO suggests the following amendments:

1. On page 3, lines 19-20: remove [that have the purpose of:].
2. On pages 3-4, remove [i-xi].

These amendments would help to further clarify the bill’s intent of aligning the state statute with the national settlement agreement and other opioid settlement agreement. Local health departments are actively engaged in efforts at the local level, collaborating closely with county and municipal governments to expend ORF dollars to best meet the unique needs of their communities. These amendments would provide the state, counties, and local towns and municipalities that have received settlements through the ORF with significantly more flexibility in the expenditure of these funds and ensure that programs and services are grounded in evidence and tailored to community needs. MACHO also recognizes the disproportionate impact of the opioid epidemic on communities of color in Maryland and fully supports inclusion of language to allow ORF funds to be used to address racial disparities in access to prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery services.

For these reasons, the Maryland Association of County Health Officers submits this Letter of Support With amendments for HB 729. For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, MACHO Executive Director at rmaioral@jhu.edu or 410-937-1433. *This communication reflects the position of MACHO.*

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