

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett and Members of the Judiciary Committee

"Testimony in Favorable Support of HB 1398 w/ amendments

My name is Jamel Freeman, and I'm speaking in support of HB 1398 with crucial amendments. As someone who's witnessed firsthand the devastating impact of heroin and fentanyl, I believe this bill takes a necessary step toward addressing this crisis.

However, I strongly advocate for integrating clinical healthcare substance abuse treatment and therapeutic approaches into this legislation. This means providing access to evidence-based treatment, counseling, and support services for individuals struggling with addiction.

To hold distributors accountable, I propose amending the bill to include:

A minimum mandatory sentence of 5 -10 years for individuals convicted of offenses related to heroin and fentanyl distribution.

- Mandatory substance abuse treatment and counseling for individuals convicted of these offenses.
- Increased funding for evidence-based treatment programs and support services.
- Collaboration between law enforcement, healthcare providers, and community organizations to address the addiction crisis.

By incorporating these amendments, we can create a more comprehensive and compassionate approach to addressing the heroin and fentanyl epidemic in Maryland.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

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