

HELPING OURSELVES TO TRANSFORM

EDUCATING AND PROMOTING
MASS LIBERATION

February 18, 2025

House Judiciary Committee
TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION

***HB 1398 - Criminal Law - Distribution of Heroin or Fentanyl Causing Serious Bodily Injury or Death
(Victoria, Scottie, Ashleigh, and Yader's Law)***

Subject: Opposition to HB1398 – Ineffective & Counterproductive Approach

Dear House Judiciary Committee,

I, Dr. Carmen Johnson, Founder of Helping Ourselves to Transform, strongly oppose HB1398, which proposes an additional 20-year penalty for those liable in fatal overdoses. History has shown that harsher prison sentences do not address drug-related issues effectively. Instead, the General Assembly should prioritize proven solutions like evidence-based treatment and education.

While well-intended, HB1398 is counterproductive. Increasing penalties will not deter drug distribution but will contribute to mass incarceration and rising state prison costs. Additionally, Drug-Induced Homicide (DIH) laws like HB1398 discourage individuals from reporting overdoses due to fear of prosecution, potentially increasing fatalities.

I urge the committee to reject HB1398 and focus on prevention and treatment strategies that will truly address the overdose crisis.

Sincerely,

Dr. Carmen Johnson

Founder, Helping Ourselves to Transform

202-674-6300