



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

February 25, 2025

The Honorable Vanessa Atterbeary
Chair, Ways and Means Committee
House Office Building, Room 131
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: House Bill (HB) 852 – Educational Institutions - Opioid Overdose-Reversing Medications - Policy Requirements (Protecting Our Kids From Overdoses Act) – Letter of Support with Amendments

Dear Chair Atterbeary and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (Department) respectfully submits this letter of support with Amendment for House Bill (HB) 852 – Educational Institutions: Opioid Overdose-Reversing Medications – Policy Requirements (Protecting Our Kids From Overdoses Act).

HB 852 requires the State Board of Education, county boards of education, and institutions of higher education in Maryland to update their drug education programs to include information about the effects of naloxone and other opioid overdose-reversing medications. Additionally, the bill allows specific individuals, including students, to carry naloxone on school property.

Given the growing opioid crisis, students in Maryland must be equipped with the information, knowledge, and tools necessary to prevent and respond to overdoses within their communities. According to the most recent finalized fatal overdose data from the Departments Vital Statistics Administration, fentanyl-related overdose deaths among individuals aged 25 and younger increased by 374 percent from 2012 to 2021. This alarming trend highlights the urgent need to protect our youth.

Our youth deserve access to comprehensive resources, especially those that are evidence-based, safe, and effective. Naloxone is a proven medication for reversing overdoses and is safe to administer; if given when an overdose is not occurring, it poses no harm. Students in schools are often closest to the issue of youth overdose and must be empowered to contribute to the solution. Educating students about how naloxone works and how to respond to an overdose is vital for addressing adolescent overdose mortality.

Providing students with access to naloxone—an evidence-based, safe, and effective medication for reversing opioid overdoses—can significantly help in preventing fatalities. Empowering

students with the knowledge of naloxone usage and effective responses to overdoses will prepare them to act quickly in life-threatening situations.

The Department fully supports the intent of HB 852 and strongly encourages its passage. However, the Department proposes the following amendments:

1. The Department is concerned that the language regarding educational programming for students as young as third grade may encourage naloxone use among students who may not be mature enough to administer it. For younger students, the focus should be on finding an adult, calling 911, and only administering naloxone if no adult is available.
2. The Department wants to ensure that if naloxone access is to be expanded on school grounds, there is clear awareness of the emergency procedures responding to a suspected opioid overdose and administering naloxone. Not everyone who chooses to carry and potentially administer naloxone on school grounds will have received proper training.
3. The Department recommends deleting all references to “other opioid reversing medications.” The introduction of new reversal drugs in the school setting would require a significant amount of education and training, especially for reversal drugs that pose a clinical risk of more prolonged or severe withdrawal symptoms. Additionally, it would not be appropriate for K-12 students to administer such drugs.

By integrating naloxone education into school curricula and allowing students to carry naloxone on school property, this bill will contribute to creating a safer environment for students and communities. Since students are often the first to encounter overdose incidents, equipping them as potential first responders can help reduce the number of opioid-related fatalities.

We believe this bill represents a crucial step in addressing the opioid crisis and ensuring that young people have the tools and knowledge they need to protect their peers. The Department remains committed to supporting initiatives that promote the health and safety of our communities, and we are confident that HB 852 will make a meaningful impact in the fight against opioid-related overdoses.

We respectfully urge your support for HB 852, the Protecting Our Kids From Overdoses Act. Thank you for considering this important legislation.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Case-Herron, Director of Governmental Affairs at sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov or 443-826-1851.

Sincerely,



Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.
Secretary

In the House Ways & Means Committee:

AMENDMENTS TO HOUSE BILL 852

(First Reading File Bill)

On page 2, in lines 11 through 12, 26 through 27, and 31, in each instance, strike “OR OTHER OPIOID OVERDOSE–REVERSING MEDICATIONS”.

On page 3, in lines 6 through 7, strike beginning with “OR OTHER OPIOID OVERDOSE–REVERSING MEDICATION”.

On page 4, in lines 10 and 13 through 14, in each instance, strike “or other OPIOID overdose–reversing medication”.

On page 5, in lines 11 through 12, 15 through 16, 21 through 22, and 26 through 27, in each instance, strike “or other overdose–reversing medication”.

On page 6, in line 4, strike “or other OPIOID overdose–reversing medication”

RATIONALE:

The Maryland Statewide Standing Order for Opioid Overdose Reversal Drugs- issue date: June 30, 2024, utilizes Naloxone for prescription and dispensing. The introduction of new drugs in the school setting would require a significant amount of education and training.