



Strengthening the Mid-Atlantic Region for Tomorrow

Four States, One Region, Infinite Possibilities

February 21, 2025

Chair Vanessa Atterbeary
Ways and Means Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB852- Educational Institutions - Opioid Overdose-Reversing Medications - Policy Requirements (Protecting Our Kids From Overdoses Act)

Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

On behalf of Strengthening the Mid-Atlantic Region for Tomorrow – SMART, we write in support of the best practice of expanding overdose reversal medication into schools to enhance the Start Talking Opioids Maryland, STOP Act. SMART is a non-profit group which was started as a Congressional Initiative between the 40 members of Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware on legislative and policy issues affecting the Mid-Atlantic Region. SMART has 15 working groups comprised of industry and community leaders across the 4 states in healthcare, veteran's issues, and workforce development.

We are gravely concerned about the on-going opioid overdose epidemic and the rise of substance use disorder, due to the disproportionate impact on the region due to the I-95 corridor. SMART has been broadening the outreach with our healthcare working group to support consistent implementation of best practices across the region to combat this crisis. The opioid epidemic currently costs the nation over \$20 billion dollars annually, with \$1.5 billion in aid to states in the State Opioid Response Grant.

Unfortunately, the fastest growing group of opioid overdoses is among school age youth 14-18, and there sadly has been overdoses during school hours and at school events. HB 852 would update existing policy to authorize any student, member of the school's staff, or lawfully present individual at the school or school-sponsored event or activity to possess naloxone or other opioid overdose reversing medication. With the rise of fentanyl-laced products from pills to vaping, a rapid response of the overdose reversal drug, naloxone, is necessary in a suspected opioid overdose. In addition, having more naloxone on school campuses serves as additional protection for bystanders who could come in contact with the dangerous substance.

Lastly, the Maryland's Opioid Restitution Fund has provided an opportunity to establish, promote, and sustain programs for the prevention and treatment of opioid use disorders. These programs, new and existing, are critical to overcoming the opioid epidemic. Overdose Reversal Medications would be an allowable use of the funds to help advance naloxone access and defray the cost for schools and higher education institutions.

SMART acknowledges, and applauds, Maryland for the great lengths taken to ensure a comprehensive approach to the crisis, however, remains concerned that inconsistent policies and protocols continue to keep Maryland near the highest overdose rate in the nation. In 2024, 18 states have introduced similar legislation in 2024 with Virginia (HB732) having passed a similar bill last year.

Thank you for your consideration of the passage of HB852

Sincerely,

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