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Health and Government
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Subcommittees

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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Prince George's County - Public Middle and High Schools - Drug Detection Products - PG
507-25/HB 379**

Testimony of Maryland State Delegate Deni Taveras

Thank you, Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and esteemed committee members. I am here to request your favorable report on PG 502-25/HB379 Prince George's County Public Middle and High Schools Drug Detection Products. After conversations with leadership and the Maryland Office of Opioid Restitution, it was decided that this bill should be converted to a statewide bill.

If LEAs become registered members of the Opioid Response Program under the Department of Health they can receive free fentanyl detection products for the school year. Currently, schools are providing NARCAN, putting us on the defensive and helping children manage their addiction. The power of fentanyl is that it only takes a grain of salt to kill a child. Rather, we need to be on the offensive and decrease demand for fentanyl and other opioids.

This bill seeks to equip students with the tools necessary to protect themselves from drug-facilitated crimes and the rising threat of fentanyl exposure. The proposed initiative will distribute free testing products in middle school, high school, clinics, libraries, and bathrooms, enabling students to detect if any powder or pills are exposed to fentanyl, allowing individuals to make informed decisions and reduce their risk of addiction.

The urgency of this bill stems from this alarming rise in fentanyl-related incidents. Many students, unaware of the presence of fentanyl in recreational drugs, are at an increased risk of accidental overdose. By implementing this bill, we can provide an essential layer of protection within our educational institutions, thereby decreasing levels of addiction as well as the demand.

Moreover, the integration of these harm reduction tools in educational settings has the potential to raise awareness about the dangers of drug use and empower students to make informed decisions. By providing these tools, we not only protect our students but also align with public health initiatives that aim to reduce overdose deaths and enhance safety.

This is not a stand alone bill. This is part of a package of bills this year that takes a full comprehensive look at addiction in children within our state.

I ask this esteemed committee for your favorable report on HB379.