

Lifestream
Health Center

Testimony in Support of HB 1249
March 31, 2026
Senate Finance Committee

Lifestream Health Center

4000 Mitchellville Rd. #322

Bowie, MD 20716

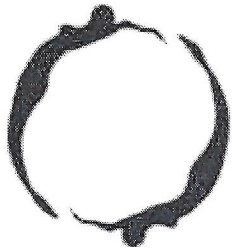
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I am Dr. Sarah Merritt, a multi-certified physician and owner of a pain management practice in Bowie, Maryland. As part of Lifestream Health Center we provided services to patients with substance abuse disorders. I have years of experience in pain management services and substance abuse treatment. I have also served as the medical director of an OTP in addition to my practice at Lifestream. I am writing in support of HB 1249. I am a strong advocate of medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD) for people with Opioid Use Disorder (OUD). MOUD decreases the incidence of overdose and death in this population. Additionally, it improved retention in treatment.

Historically sober living houses have been abstinence-based largely due to tradition, so there is often reluctance to accept the use of medications in these facilities. There is also stigma associated with the use of medications like buprenorphine and methadone, that persons prescribed MOUD “are not really clean” and “a drug is a drug.”

The United States is currently in the throes of an opioid overdose epidemic resulting in the death of over 100 people a day. There are effective treatments for OUD but only about one quarter of people who are eligible are prescribed these medications. Housing can also be a challenge for people with OUD as returning from treatment or incarceration to a place where there is active drug use can result in relapse to active use. Recovery residences or sober living houses are a solution to the housing issue. They provide a safe, stable environment as people transition back into the community.

The fact is drugs are becoming stronger. Fentanyl is more potent than heroin and is often adulterated with other substances potentially making it more lethal than older opioids. The goal of the various levels of care including recovery residences is to provide excellent care to their residents according to best medical practices and evidence-based standards. This bill does much to hasten this goal.



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Sincerely,

Sarah Merritt, MD

ABMS Board Certified in Anesthesiology, Pain Medicine, and Addiction Medicine