

SENATE BILL 906

STUART T. WELCH, ASSISTANT STATE'S ATTORNEY

POSITION: FAVORABLE FOR SB 906

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My name is Stuart Welch, and I am an Assistant State's Attorney for Harford County. I am the Senior Contact Attorney for the Felony Guns and Drugs Unit and specially assigned to the Harford County Drug Task Force. I write this to offer my support for Senate Bill 906, also known as Victoria, Scottie, Ashleigh, and Yader's Law.

Senate Bill 906 would add Maryland to the majority of states already utilizing drug-induced homicide laws. Since the rise of fentanyl in the United States, more and more states have passed drug-induced homicide laws for a reason. Fentanyl, and its analogues, have drastically increased the dangers of drug trafficking.

In 2025, I secured a conviction of second-degree depraved heart murder of a drug dealer who distributed the fatal dose of cocaine mixed with fentanyl that led to the death of a twenty-five-year-old male in Harford County. The investigation of the case showed that the dealer dealt a combination of cocaine mixed with fentanyl to the victim, who the dealer claimed was his good friend. The victim had serious mental health issues, and the Defendant even admitted that he was aware that drugs made the victim's mental health issues worse. Despite knowing this, the Defendant admitted that he still distributed drugs to the victim. It was also clear that the victim was expecting cocaine only and did not ask for fentanyl. The victim was found deceased the next day by a handyman who went to the victim's residence to change the locks. This was the first time in the history of Maryland that a drug dealer was convicted of second-degree murder for dealing a fatal dose of drugs.

With the conviction in this case making the news, I heard from multiple other counties that wanted to start pursuing these charges themselves. In fact, Carroll County currently has pending murder and manslaughter charges against a drug dealer that they decided to charge after consulting with me about this result. This issue impacts every county of every state, and without specific drug-induced homicide laws, prosecutors will continue to struggle to effectively bring justice for the victim and families of the victim.

The 2025 case was not the first case of this kind that I have charged. In fact, I have regularly prosecuted these cases ever since 2023, when I first decided to pursue these charges. In that period of time, I have worked with the Harford County Drug Task Force to develop the way we investigate and prosecute fatal overdose cases. Even with all of the hard work we put into these cases, they still often result in a simple drug distribution or manslaughter conviction. This leads to disappointment for the families of victims who rightfully believe that more should be done to the dealer responsible for their loved one's death.

Being a hands-on prosecutor, I regularly meet with the families of fatal overdose victims. These families carry with them an immense pain that only gets worse when I have to tell them that because their loved one overdosed in Maryland, it will be difficult to get anything beyond a drug distribution conviction for the dealer responsible for the fatal overdose. Part of being a hands-on drug prosecutor means that I also regularly sit down and talk with drug dealers in what are called proffer sessions. I have spoken with many drug dealers during my career, and I can confirm that even the small-time dealers are well aware of how dangerous fentanyl is. They are also well aware that fentanyl is often mixed with other drugs like cocaine. Despite knowing these dangers, they still distribute these drugs all throughout Maryland.

In closing, Senate Bill 906 is a great step in providing prosecutors like me with the proper tools to bring justice against drug dealers who continue to profit off of distributing incredibly dangerous substances. For these reasons, **I respectfully request a favorable report for Senate Bill 906.**

Thank you for your attention and consideration of this important subject.