



January 20, 2026

**House Ways & Means Committee
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

*HB 222 - Educational Institutions - Opioid Overdose-Reversing Medications - Policy Requirements
(Naloxone Access Act)*

Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB) is a nonprofit organization that serves as the local behavioral health authority (LBHA) for Baltimore City. BHSB works to increase access to a full range of quality behavioral health (mental health and substance use) services and advocates for innovative approaches to prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery for individuals, families, and communities. Baltimore City represents nearly 35 percent of the public behavioral health system in Maryland, serving over 100,000 people with mental illness and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as “behavioral health”) annually.

Behavioral Health System Baltimore supports HB 222 - Educational Institutions - Opioid Overdose-Reversing Medications - Policy Requirements (Naloxone Access Act). This bill would further incorporate naloxone education into existing drug education and prevention efforts while authorizing a broader range of people to carry and administer it. Naloxone is a safe and effective overdose reversal medication and deserves to be accessible and well understood. These modest changes to existing policy will help to save lives and to reduce the stigma of substance use disorder.

The number of overdose deaths in Maryland has recently declined but remains staggeringly high. Over 1,700 people died of fatal overdose in Maryland in 2024, including over 750 who died in Baltimore City.¹ The rate of overdose appears to have continued to decline in 2025, but the figures are not yet final. While these trends are encouraging, the state must continue to make preventing overdoses a top priority. Overdose remains one of the leading causes of death for young people and more work remains to be done.

A primary strategy that Maryland has used to prevent overdose is to expand access to naloxone and to increase the number of people who are comfortable carrying and using it. HB 222 is a commonsense expansion of this approach. Naloxone is safe to carry and administer. Maryland has already taken many steps to provide access to naloxone and to stock it in schools, but overdose reversal is an intervention that is very time sensitive. Allowing students and teachers outside of the school nursing staff to possess and use it is a promising initiative that can save lives and keep our schools safe.²

No one at our state’s schools should ever suffer a fatal overdose when they can be easily prevented.
BHSB urges the House Ways & Means Committee to support HB 222.

For more information, please contact BHSB Policy Director Dan Rabbitt at 443-401-6142

Endnotes:

¹ MDH Overdose Data Portal, available at: <https://health.maryland.gov/dataoffice/Pages/mdh-dashboards.aspx>

² Calihan JB, Carney BL, Schmill DM, Bagley SM. The Call for a School-Based Approach to Opioid Overdose Prevention. Am J Public Health. 2024 Dec;114(12):1305-1308. Available at: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11540943/#bib9>