

HB0222 - Favorable Testimony: Educational Institutions - Opioid Overdose-Reversing Medications - Policy Requirements (Naloxone Access Act)

Michael Gannon, Montgomery County Regional Student Government Association

Dear members of the House Ways and Means Committee, and members of the House Appropriations Committee:

My name is Michael Gannon, and I am a student at Magruder High School in Montgomery County. I am writing to you as a concerned student, urging you all to report favorably on House Bill 222, the Naloxone Access Act.

The opioid epidemic is no longer a distant threat; it has arrived in our hallways. In 2022, according to MCPS, Montgomery County experienced a heartbreaking 120% increase in youth fatal overdoses compared to the previous year. Most of these incidents are driven by illicit fentanyl, which was involved in 69% of all drug overdose deaths in 2023 as reported by the Maryland Department of Health. At my school and across the county, we have seen that fentanyl is often disguised as common prescription pills like Xanax or Percocet, making every encounter potentially lethal for an unsuspecting student. In a 2025 districtwide poll conducted by the Montgomery County Regional Student Government Association, we found that students overwhelmingly reported drug and substance abuse as their primary school safety concern.

HB0222 is a critical step in modernizing our response to this crisis. While Montgomery County has already begun equipping schools with naloxone, this bill ensures that every student, staff member, and lawfully present individual has the explicit authorization to possess and, most importantly, administer this life-saving medication in good faith without fear of liability.

Nationally, the CDC found that naloxone was not administered in 70% of fatal overdoses among youth aged 10 to 19, despite a bystander being present in 67% of those cases. By authorizing any individual acting in "good faith" to use naloxone, we remove the hesitation that can cost a life. This bill updates drug prevention programs to include the "mitigating effects" of naloxone, ensuring students are not just warned about the dangers of fentanyl but are also equipped with the knowledge to save their peers. Requiring annual reports on every incident where naloxone is used will provide the data necessary to understand where our resources are most needed.

In Montgomery County, 11 students died from overdoses in 2022 alone. We cannot afford to wait for the next tragedy at Magruder High School or any other institution. HB0222 treats this epidemic with the urgency it demands by making naloxone as accessible as a fire extinguisher.

I urge you all to report favorably on HB0222 to ensure that the youth of Maryland are not just victims of this crisis, but are empowered to end it.