

March 11, 2021

Delegate Shane E. Pendergrass  
Health and Government Operations Committee  
House Office Building, Room 241  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SUPPORT of House Bill 396 - FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Pendergrass and House HGO Committee Members,

I am a Marylander and I support House Bill 396 "Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program," which will allow community-based organizations such as our organization to establish overdose prevention programs to reduce overdose deaths. In 2019, someone in a Baltimore community center was showing signs of an overdose. For about 30 minutes, volunteers and workers were trying to figure out the most humane way to go about addressing the Marylander's unresponsiveness. It was by chance a volunteer went to the director and asked what to do. They were able to call 911 and save this person's life. Why must we leave people's lives to chance?

It breaks my heart because I have an even more personal story to share with you. In 2020, my friend went to the bathroom in my apartment. He came out the bathroom with extreme symptoms of overdose. I could see the life slipping out of my friend's body. Even though I went to a training to administer Narcan, there was no Narcan readily available in my apartment. Luckily, I was able to gather my wits and call for help while still attending to my friend's unresponsive body.

It was luck that I had access to a phone as a poor citizen. And, yes, it was indeed luck that the first responders got there in time to save my best friend's life. I heard a politician ask once if the community wants OPS in their neighborhood. I am the community and I say yes. The politician also asks if this is the right time. If there had already been an OPS in my neighborhood, my best friend's life would not have been up to chance. Saving his life through an OPS is evidence-based. The proposed Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program mirrors more than 150 such programs already established across the world. More than 60 cities in 12 countries operate such programs, and numerous studies demonstrate the positive impacts. In all the 150+ OPS around the world, in which millions of supervised drug injections have occurred, no one has died of a fatal overdose. Let us not leave people's lives to chance.

Yours Truly,

Eryn Ainsley  
123 W 29<sup>th</sup> St  
Baltimore, MD 21218