

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
(Public Health - Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program) -
FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Pendergrass and House HGO Committee Members,

My name is Meredith Zoltick and I am a nurse practitioner in Baltimore City and I strongly 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, which continue to occur at unprecedented levels in Maryland.

As a nurse practitioner in Baltimore City, I have seen first-hand how essential the city's current harm reduction services are for my patients, but I have also seen where our current services are lacking. My patients continue to have fatal overdoses, skin and soft tissue infections, as well as acquire infectious diseases. After reviewing the research, speaking with other providers and advocates around the world, and listening to my patients I strongly believe that Overdose Prevention Sites will not only save lives, but improve the wellbeing of people in our community. This COVID-19 pandemic continues to highlight the inequalities in our healthcare system. At this time, I feel my patients who use substances are at an increased risk for COVID-19 as well as having a fatal overdose. Now is the time to pass legislation authorizing overdose prevention sites to help keep people who drugs alive and safe.

For over 30 years, it has been proven that Overdose Prevention Sites save lives. We urge the General Assembly to authorize overdose and infectious disease prevention services, a proven intervention used across the globe to decrease overdose deaths. 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 of the 150+ OPS around the world, in which millions of supervised drug injections have occurred, **no one has died of a fatal overdose.**

This is an emergency and we urge you to act now. **We ask that the Health and Government Operations Committee give SB396 a favorable report.**

For more information about my position, please contact Meredith Zoltick, CRNP at Mzoltic1@jhu.edu.

Thank you,

Meredith Zoltick, MSN/MPH, CRNP