

March 9, 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,

As a resident of Maryland and a volunteer with the Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition, I write to you in support of 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.

Maryland is in the throes of the opioid epidemic that continues to rage across our country. People are dying increasingly due to the fentanyl that is being spiked into heroin and other drugs, and these deaths are completely preventable, especially when an overdose prevention site is available. In the first six months of 2020 alone, all 24 local jurisdictions in Maryland reported opioid-related intoxication fatalities. Indeed, my county, Montgomery, saw 51 opioid-related deaths in the first half of the year, while Baltimore suffered 427 deaths over the same period.

It is time for action from our elected officials. 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 have demonstrated their positive impacts. **Not a single person has died** in any of the 150+ OPS around the world, in which millions of supervised drug injections have occurred.

This is health crisis, and we urge you to act now.

Please, give a favorable report on SB396.

Sincerely,

Zach Larson-Rabin, Ph.D.
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