

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,

I, Sean Colleen Laracy, a nursing student at Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing and resident of Maryland's District 46, support House Bill 396 "Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program," which will allow community-based organizations to establish overdose prevention programs to reduce overdose deaths, which continue to occur at unprecedented levels in Maryland.

I want to be a nurse because I admire the field's commitment to evidence-based, non-judgmental and compassionate care. The nursing curriculum emphasizes approaching every patient holistically: we work to incorporate our understanding of the social determinants of health, historic and structural inequities, and up-to-date research into every patient interaction. Overdose prevention sites acknowledge each of these aims.

Additionally, *The Code of Ethics for Nurses*, a canon that guides our learning and future practice, outlines the many ways in which this bill stands in accord with our ethical conviction as nurses. According to Provision 1, as nurses and nursing students, we must "provide nursing services according to need, setting aside any bias or prejudice." "We must extend respect to all those who require nursing care." And we must act as leaders who can collaborate in "alleviating systemic structures that have negative influence on individual and community health." If we are taught to abide by the American Nurses Association Code of Ethics, we should support Overdose Prevention Sites.

My support for this bill allows me to integrate all of the aspects that brought me to nursing and serves as guide for the kind of nurse I want to be. Overdose Prevention Sites are a practical, compassionate, and evidence-based component to fixing the crisis that the healthcare industry helped create.

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 Sean Laracy at slaracy1@jh.edu