

March 8, 2020

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 am writing to express my support for Senate Bill 279 “Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program,” which will allow community based organizations such as Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition and BRIDGES Coalition to establish overdose prevention programs to reduce overdose deaths, which continue to occur at unprecedented levels in Maryland.

When asked what he thinks happens to us when we die, Keanu Reeves once said, “I know that the ones who love us will miss us.” Every life cut short due to overdose is a tragedy, both because each death is a person gone far too early, and because every loss rips a hole in the lives of those left behind. I have personally lost a number of close friends to overdose, and I truly believe that these people would still be in my earthly life today if they had had access to an Overdose Prevention Site such as the one being proposed in this bill. If my loved ones had been able to visit an Overdose Prevention Site, I wouldn’t have visions of them losing consciousness in their car, or on the kitchen floor as their grandparents slept in the next room. I wouldn’t fear that the shivering wracking my bed would suddenly stop, or worry what I might find when I check on my partner who has been in the bathroom for too long. I wouldn’t know the feeling of helplessness as he began turning blue on our floor while I desperately tried to find someone with Naloxone because we didn’t have any in our house.

Instead, I would have the comfort and confidence that each and every one of these friends would be supported, watched over, and cared for as they used their supply. I could sleep easy knowing that they would come home, that I would get another day with them - another day of hugs and laughter, of homemade biscuits and gravy and inside jokes.

I ask you to support Senate Bill 279 because I want people like my friends to stick around. I also ask for your support so that people like me don’t have to go through life missing those people - so that we can have our days of love and laughter instead of an agonizing hole of grief.

**For over 30 years, it has been proven that Overdose Prevention Sites save lives.** I 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.**

**In summary, I respectfully ask that the Finance Committee give SB279 a favorable report.**

Sincerely,

Amy Callanan  
2814 Echodale Ave  
Baltimore, MD 21214