

February 16, 2022

The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass
Chairman
Health and Government Operations Committee
Maryland House
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support for SB394 Statewide Targeted Overdose Prevention (STOP) Act of 2022

Dear Chairwoman Pendergrass and Health and Government Operations Committee Members,

As a healthcare professional who has significant experience working with diverse patient populations in a variety of healthcare settings, I write to you today in support of the STOP Act. I believe increasing access to opioid reversal medications in community settings is critical for those at high-risk of overdose.

Over the past 20 years I have provided care to individuals who would directly benefit from initiatives covered under the STOP Act. My experience with patients suffering from substance use disorder (SUD), mental health disorders, homelessness, and other care needs, gives me a unique perspective on the benefits this legislation could provide to a substantial portion of our population that is often overlooked and underserved.

Considering there is a common comorbidity between substance abuse and mental health disorders, mental health disorders and homelessness, and homelessness and substance abuse, it is critical settings serving populations most high-risk for overdose have resources on hand to mitigate life threatening situations. Allowing the dispensing of overdose reversal medications at homeless service programs, intensive outpatient programs, opioid treatment programs, and reentry programs, as well as at emergency room discharge, would provide an additional failsafe to patients. Patients who have already been significantly impacted by the pandemic, as evidenced by [CDC data](#) which presents an alarmingly high rate of overdose deaths. Maryland is not exempt from the rest of the nation. We have experienced nearly a 16% jump in overdose deaths. The epidemic has not subsided, instead it has been catalyzed and exacerbated by a public health emergency that is straining already scarce resources.

I thank you for the work that you do in supporting the health and wellbeing for Marylanders. While all overdose deaths cannot be prevented, the number can be reduced if action is taken to provide critical lifesaving resources to high-risk patients. I ask that you consider supporting SB394 to ensure that some of the most vulnerable members of our population can be provided resources with the potential to save their lives.

Sincerely,
Shari Hames, RN
Woodbine, MD