



## Strengthening the Mid-Atlantic Region for Tomorrow

Four States, One Region, Infinite Possibilities

February 15, 2022

The Honorable Delores Kelly  
Chairwoman, Finance Committee  
Maryland Senate  
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support for SB 394 - Statewide Targeted Overdose Prevention (STOP) Act of 2022

Dear Chairwoman Pendergrass and Committee Members,

We write to support Senate Bill 394 the STOP Act of 2022 sponsored by the Administration which will expand naloxone access and provide the dispensing of naloxone for those at high-risk of overdose.

The Strengthening the Mid-Atlantic Region for Tomorrow (SMART) is a non-profit group that supports Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware on legislative and policy issues affecting the Mid-Atlantic Region. SMART has 15 working groups comprised of industry and community leaders across the 4 states in healthcare, veteran's issues, and workforce development.

We are gravely concerned about the on-going opioid overdose epidemic and the rise of substance use disorder during the global pandemic which is resulting in an average 192 deaths daily according to Addiction Policy Forum. More than 75% of these take place outside medical settings, with the majority of these (54%) taking place in homes. Our 4 states are among the most impacted in the nation. Not only are these losses unnecessary, there are enormous direct and indirect costs to families, healthcare systems, employers and society that may be greatly mitigated through existing channels.

According to the CDC approximately 81,230 drug overdose deaths occurred in the United States in the 12-months ending in May 2020. In Maryland the Opioid Operation Command Center stated in their 2020 report that *"in the first six months of 2020, there was a total of 1,326 reported unintentional intoxication deaths from all types of drugs and alcohol in Maryland. This represents an increase of 9.1 percent from the 1,215 intoxication deaths reported in the first half of 2019. Opioids were involved in 89.5 percent of all fatalities."* 2021 saw an increase of over 15% from 2020. Unfortunately, each of the SMART states have seen similar statistics.

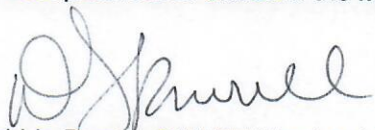
Consistency of policies in the Mid-Atlantic transient region is essential to combatting the opioid epidemic. The federal Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, State Targeted Response Grants and State Opioid Response Grants target and reference evidence based best practices for implementation in the States. The American Medical Association, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued guidelines which call for physicians to offer naloxone when factors that increase risk for opioid overdose, such as a history of overdose, substance use disorder, high-dose opioids, or opioids prescribed concurrently with benzodiazepines, are present. The STOP Act helps create consistency, and the intent of SB 394 helps support naloxone access for those at highest risk of overdose by allowing community service programs: homeless shelters, treatment centers, an opioid treatment program or re-entry program to dispense an overdose reversal drug. This bill is another tool in the toolbox to ensure best practices are implemented in the region.

With close proximity of the Mid-Atlantic Region, SMART Healthcare Group works to promote consistent best practices among the region in closing the gap between legislative policy and implementation of best practice.

For these reasons, the STOP Act is consistent with best practices of states in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Sincerely,

  
Robert Carullo  
SMART Executive Director  
[bcarullo@smartstates.com](mailto:bcarullo@smartstates.com)  
609-304-2904

  
Debbie Burrell, SMART Maryland Board Member  
Chair, Health Working Group  
[dburrell@burrellig.com](mailto:dburrell@burrellig.com)  
301-401-9490