



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 1, 2024

House Bill 1121

**Public Health - Opioids and Opioid Overdose Reversal Drugs – Information
House Health and Government Operations Committee**

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

House Bill 1121 requires a licensed health care provider who prescribes or dispenses an opioid or an opioid overdose reversal drug, to provide certain information to the individual receiving the prescription; and authorizing a pharmacist to comply with the requirement by posting the information in a conspicuous location.

The opioid epidemic has caused extensive suffering within our communities, affecting individuals and families profoundly. To encourage the appropriate use and disposal of these medications, it is crucial to offer easily understandable information about their potential lethal consequences and addictive properties. Additionally, if an overdose occurs due to overuse of prescription opioids, it is crucial to provide information about the opioid's antagonist. Proper usage of this antagonist can effectively reverse the effects of an overdose and potentially save lives.

Instead of relying solely on written instructions for highly addictive medications, pharmacists should offer verbal guidance to individuals. Medical terminology can create communication barriers, but these can be overcome by providing explanations that match the patient's understanding of their condition and general health literacy. Combining verbal instructions with written materials enhances patient comprehension, ensuring a clear understanding of medication usage.

In Maryland, the opioid death rate surged from 9.1 per 100,000 in 2011 to 38.5 per 100,000 in 2021, underscoring the urgency of addressing this crisis.¹ This legislation recognizes the gravity of the opioid epidemic and takes practical steps to confront it. Guided by Catholic social

¹ <https://www.kff.org/statedata/mental-health-and-substance-use-state-fact-sheets/maryland/>

teaching, which emphasizes the importance of the common good and the well-being of every person, it is our responsibility to respond to this crisis with empathy and concrete actions.

For these reasons, the MCC asks for a favorable report on **HB 1121**.

Thank you for your consideration.