



February 15, 2024

House Health & Government Operations Committee

House Bill 736 - Health Insurance and Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Coverage - Opioid Reversal Drugs and Products (NARCAN Price Cap Act)

POSITION: FAVORABLE

The Recovery Housing and Treatment Centers Coalition of Maryland (RHTC) writes to support House Bill 736 - Health Insurance and Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Coverage - Opioid Reversal Drugs and Products (NARCAN Price Cap Act). We are a coalition of recovery residences, group homes, and treatment centers throughout Maryland; which work to educate the importance of maintaining and expanding recovery facilities and services in Maryland and the benefits that such facilities have on persons in recovery, the community, and the State.

The availability of naloxone, commonly known as Narcan, as an over-the-counter (OTC) medication has the potential to widen access to this life-saving medication that can reverse opioid overdoses. However, several barriers could hinder its widespread uptake and access, such as pharmacy stocking decisions, cost, lack of awareness about accessing the drug in pharmacies, and confusing insurer reimbursement policies. At present, two versions of OTC Narcan have been approved by the FDA, but only one is currently available in pharmacies. Even if stores decide to stock OTC Narcan, its price tag, roughly \$45 for a 2-dose, 4mg nasal spray may present a cost barrier for many, including friends and family who wish to carry the drug as a precaution. The urgency to continue to address the issue of accessibility is noted in the most recent data from Maryland's Overdose Dashboard. Maryland saw a decrease in fatal overdoses in the 12 months ending in September 2023, according to preliminary data provided by the Vital Statistics Administration of the Maryland Department of Health. There were 2,513 fatal overdoses in Maryland from October 2022 to September 2023, a decrease of 1.4% from the 2,549 reported in the previous 12 months¹. Expanding access to lifesaving treatments like Narcan could help the number of fatal overdoses in our state to continue to decrease.

For people paying out of pocket, the current cost of OTC Narcan at \$45 may present a substantial hurdle. This may be especially true for friends and families wanting to keep Narcan on hand for emergencies.

¹ <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/799cc6c21cf94e89a174fa06532febd9>



Additionally, potent opioid overdoses might require multiple Narcan doses, increasing the overall expense. Providing that the entities mentioned in the bill shall cover nonprescription naloxone hydrochloride and any other drug or product that is approved by the Federal Food and Drug Administration for the complete or partial reversal of an opioid overdose without imposing a copayment or coinsurance requirement that exceeds \$10 per package will help to further access to these life saving drugs.

It is for these reasons that we politely ask for a favorable report on House Bill 736. Thank you.

For more information call or email:

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