



February 13, 2024

The Honorable Joseline Pena-Melnyk
Health & Government Operations Committee
House Office Building – Room 241
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support – House Bill 736: NARCAN Price Cap Act

Dear Chairman Pena-Melnyk and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) and the Washington Psychiatric Society (WPS) are state medical organizations whose physician members specialize in diagnosing, treating, and preventing mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Formed more than sixty-five years ago to support the needs of psychiatrists and their patients, both organizations work to ensure available, accessible, and comprehensive quality mental health resources for all Maryland citizens; and strive through public education to dispel the stigma and discrimination of those suffering from a mental illness. As the district branches of the American Psychiatric Association covering the state of Maryland, MPS and WPS represent over 1000 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

MPS/WPS strongly support House Bill 736: Health Insurance and Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Coverage - Opioid Reversal Drugs and Products (NARCAN Price Cap Act) (HB 736). The Maryland Office of Overdose Response reports that 2,513 fatal overdoses occurred in Maryland from October 2022 to September 2023. In the previous twelve months to that, 2,549 fatal overdoses occurred in Maryland. Opioids were by far and away the primary driver of said overdoses. Also worth noting is that in the twelve months ending in September 2023, compared to the twelve months ending in September 2022, there were 1.2% fewer emergency medical services (EMS) naloxone administrations in Maryland, decreasing from 9,018 to 8,909. However, in the twelve months ending in September 2023, compared to the twelve months ending in September 2022, there were 6.5% more non-fatal, opioid-related hospital emergency department visits, increasing from 8,864 to 9,437.

The numbers are clear, opioid overdoses continue to be a significant public health concern for Maryland, with thousands of deaths still occurring each year. Thus, making naloxone and similar overdose reversal medications readily available can help prevent fatalities and reduce the burden on EMS. While naloxone may seem costly, especially when considering widespread distribution, it is cost-effective when compared to the medical expenses associated with treating opioid overdoses in emergency rooms or the long-term costs of addiction treatment.

Many states have enacted laws to expand access to naloxone and similar overdose reversal medications, recognizing their importance in combating the opioid epidemic. Requiring



insurance and Medicaid to cover naloxone and similar overdose reversal medications aligns with these legislative efforts and supports public policy aimed at addressing the opioid crisis. Every individual deserves access to life-saving medicines, regardless of their financial situation. Denying coverage for naloxone and similar overdose reversal medications could result in preventable deaths.

Therefore, for all the reasons above, MPS and WPS ask the committee for a favorable report on HB 736. If you have any questions with regard to this testimony, please feel free to contact Thomas Tompsett Jr. at tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com.

Respectfully submitted,
The Maryland Psychiatric Society and the Washington Psychiatric Society
Legislative Action Committee