



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB798 - OPIOID RESTITUTION FUND –

INTERACTIVE DASHBOARD

SUPPORT

GOOD AFTERNOON CHAIR PEÑA-MELNYK, VICE CHAIR CULLISON, AND COLLEAGUES.

FOR THE RECORD I'M DELEGATE MARY LEHMAN ASKING FOR YOUR FAVORABLE REPORT OF HB 798.

HB798 AIMS TO IMPROVE TRANSPARENCY AROUND MARYLAND'S USE OF OPIOID SETTLEMENT FUNDS THROUGH AN INTERACTIVE DASHBOARD. THIS BILL ENSURES THE PUBLIC CAN ACCESS CLEAR, UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION ABOUT THE FUNDS SECURED THROUGH SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT PUBLIC HEALTH LAWSUITS OF OUR LIFETIME.

AS OF FY 2024, MARYLAND HAS RECEIVED \$201.2 MILLION IN OPIOID SETTLEMENT FUNDS. \$158.4 MILLION WENT TO THE OPIOID RESTITUTION FUND (ORF), WHILE \$42.8 MILLION WAS DIRECTLY GIVEN TO LOCAL JURISDICTIONS. OF THE \$158.4 MILLION THAT HAVE BEEN RECEIVED BY THE OPIOID RESTITUTION FUND, LESS THAN \$10 MILLION HAVE BEEN EXPENDED¹.

CURRENTLY, THERE IS NO EASY WAY FOR THE PUBLIC TO ASCERTAIN WHEN AND HOW THESE FUNDS ARE SPENT. LOCAL JURISDICTIONS ARE NOT REQUIRED TO PUBLICLY REPORT THEIR SPENDING, MAKING IT DIFFICULT FOR MARYLANDERS TO TRACK THE EFFECTIVENESS AND FAIRNESS OF FUND USAGE.

¹Maryland Opioid Restitution Fund Expenditure Report Fiscal Year 2024 <https://stopoverdose.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/34/2024/11/Revised-FY-2024-State-Finance-and-Procurement-Article-%C2%A7-7%E2%80%933331-%E2%80%94-Opioid-Restitution-Fund-Expenditure-Report-MSAR-14240.pdf>

²Opioid Restitution Fund Public Reporting Recommendations <https://stopoverdose.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/34/2024/12/Public-Reporting-Recommendations-for-Opioid-Restitution-Fund-Expenditures.pdf>

STATES INCLUDING NORTH CAROLINA AND DELAWARE USE PUBLIC DASHBOARDS TO TRACK OPIOID FUND SPENDING. OTHER STATES, INCLUDING MAINE, ARE WORKING TOWARD THIS GOAL. BASED ON OUR RESEARCH, THE AFOREMENTIONED STATES MANDATED THE CREATION OF A DASHBOARD IN THEIR RESPECTIVE STATE-SUBDIVISION AGREEMENTS, WHICH WERE CREATED EARLY IN THE SETTLEMENT PROCESS. TO MY KNOWLEDGE, MARYLAND WOULD BE THE FIRST STATE TO MANDATE A DASHBOARD THROUGH LEGISLATION.

IN DECEMBER OF 2024, THE MARYLAND OFFICE OF OVERDOSE RESPONSE (MOOR) PUBLISHED ITS “OPIOID RESTITUTION FUND PUBLIC REPORTING RECOMMENDATIONS²,” WHICH STATED:

“Maryland’s processes for sharing [information on prescription opioid-related settlement funds] are less sophisticated than other states and could be improved to increase transparency and public accessibility. For example, Maryland’s current reporting framework does not use an interactive dashboard, which, if implemented, could facilitate access to this vital information.”

HB798 INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING, EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 1, 2025:

- MOOR AND THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH MUST DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN AN INTERACTIVE DASHBOARD.
- THE DASHBOARD WILL BE FUNDED AND MAINTAINED BY THE ORF (THIS IS AN APPROVED USE, ACCORDING TO THE LIST OF APPROVED USES FOR SETTLEMENT FUNDS³).
- THE DASHBOARD (DISAGGREGATED BY STATE, COUNTY, AND MUNICIPALITY) MUST INCLUDE:
 - PAYMENT SCHEDULE INFORMATION, INCLUDING ESTIMATED PAYMENTS FROM OPIOID SETTLEMENTS.
 - PAST SPENDING OF SETTLEMENT FUNDS.
 - PLANNED SPENDING PRIORITIES.
 - DETAILS ON FUNDED INITIATIVES, INCLUDING PERFORMANCE MEASURES WHEN APPLICABLE.
 - DETAILS ON PUBLIC HEARINGS RELATED TO FUND USAGE.
- THE DEPARTMENT MUST ESTABLISH AN ONLINE PORTAL FOR REPORTING OR UPLOADING THE REQUIRED DATA
- THE DASHBOARD SHOULD LEVERAGE EXISTING PLATFORMS THAT ALREADY PROVIDE DATA ON OPIOID USE AND OVERDOSES IN THE STATE WHERE PRACTICABLE.

THE DEPARTMENT ALREADY MAINTAINS AN OVERDOSE DATA DASHBOARD, WHICH TRACKS OVERDOSE TRENDS. THE SETTLEMENT DASHBOARD CREATED

BY THIS LEGISLATION WOULD BE SEAMLESSLY INTEGRATED INTO THE EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE. COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES ARE ALREADY PROVIDING THE FINANCIAL INFORMATION. MOOR HAS ALREADY APPROVED THE ESTIMATED \$80,000 NEEDED FOR THE DASHBOARD, MAKING THIS A COST-EFFECTIVE AND IMPACTFUL INITIATIVE. MY OFFICE IS WORKING WITH THE MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES TO REFINE LOCAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS TO ENSURE THAT THERE IS NO MANDATED DOUBLE-REPORTING.

BY PASSING THIS LEGISLATION, WE CAN ENSURE THAT EVERY DOLLAR IS USED EFFECTIVELY TO ADDRESS THE OPIOID CRISIS WHILE INCREASING GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY.