

**Senate Bill 83 Public Health – Overdose and Infectious Disease
Prevention Services Program**

Finance Committee

February 4, 2025

Position: SUPPORT

The Mental Health Association of Maryland is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization that brings together consumers, families, clinicians, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health, mental illness and substance use. We appreciate this opportunity to present this testimony in support of Senate Bill 83.

SB 83 will allow community-based organizations in Maryland to establish overdose and infectious disease prevention programs. Overdose prevention sites are facilities where people can use previously purchased drugs under trained supervision. Providing sterile needles, health care services and referrals to drug treatment, these sites aim to reduce the harms associated with drug use. The bill limits the number of programs to six sites across the state.

The public health and safety threat from drug-related intoxication continues to be a major concern. Maryland has made progress in recent years to address the epidemic, but we are still in the midst of a crisis that is devastating families across the state. From December 2023 – November 2024, 1,689 Marylanders lost their lives to an overdose.¹

This is a public health crisis that cries out for new solutions. The program proposed in SB 83 is modeled after programs that have a 30+ year track record of preventing overdose deaths, HIV and hepatitis, and other diseases, and helping people with substance use disorder find treatment and other needed social services. As of August 2022, 147 of these programs are providing services in 91 communities across 16 countries.

Overdose prevention sites are critical components in the battle to reduce overdose deaths in our state. For this reason, MHAMD supports SB 83 and urges a favorable report.

¹ <https://health.maryland.gov/dataoffice/Pages/mdh-dashboards.aspx>