



## HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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Senator Delores Kelley, Chair  
Senate Finance Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building, 3 East  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Testimony **IN SUPPORT** of SB 394: Statewide Targeted Overdose Prevention (STOP) Act of 2022

Dear Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly highlighted the disparities in our healthcare system, including the need for greater resources dedicated to prolonged substance misuse in Maryland and throughout the country. Though Howard County has seen a 27% decrease in nonfatal overdoses from 2017 through 2021, drug overdoses continue to hit communities in our State and nation hard.

Recent data from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) show that from April 2020 to April 2021, overdose deaths rose 21 percent in Maryland. The CDC also reports that during the same time period, nationally more than 100,000 people died from drug overdoses. This is a new record high, with overdose deaths rising nearly 30 percent in just one year. Senate Bill 394 would allow designated emergency first responders to dispense naloxone to individuals who received treatment for nonfatal drug overdose, this expanded scope of services will help save lives.

I remain committed to expanding access to life-saving treatment and developing solutions to have a more robust overdose response strategy. Since I took office in 2019, Howard County opened both Howard House and Hilda's Place, which are treatment houses for men and women recovering from substance use disorders. We also opened Sheppard Pratt's new campus in Elkridge, which contains 17 medically managed detox beds for people with co-occurring mental health challenges.

My Administration has invested \$1.5 million in these residential treatment facilities to create a continuum of care that funds case managers, peer support specialists and a reliable transportation network. Additionally, we provide nearly \$600,000 annually to support behavioral health navigation support.

Despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, over the past year our Health Department has trained nearly 600 individuals in its Overdose Response Program. This program includes naloxone administration and has distributed 550 naloxone kits and more than 4,500 Deterra Bags, which allow for safe drug disposal.

I believe these types of transformational and innovative interventions will help reverse disturbing opioid trends and serve as long-term commitments to minimizing substance misuse in Maryland.

I welcome your partnership and support and urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 394.

All the best,

Howard County Executive