



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 Senate Bill 419: Opioid Restitution Fund – Appropriation of Settlement Funds

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

Though Howard County has seen a 27 percent decrease in nonfatal overdoses from 2017 through 2021, drug overdoses continue to hit 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 of drug overdoses. This is a new record high, with overdose deaths rising nearly 30 percent in just one year.

Senate Bill 419, introduced by Senator Feldman, would require the appropriation of certain funds from the Opioid Restitution Fund to be made in accordance with certain settlement agreements. In May 2019, I announced that Howard County would be formally suing opioid makers and distributors in Circuit Court holding them accountable for their role in causing the epidemic. As part of the Multi District Litigation, our case is being heard in federal court in Ohio. The recent settlements will provide an estimated \$12.8 million to Howard County over an eighteen-year period to fight against the harms opioids have caused our community.

Howard County has taken steps to expand access to life-saving treatment and developing solutions to have a more robust overdose response strategy. We are pleased that these companies are being held accountable for their unscrupulous actions and that our residents impacted by the opioid crisis will receive the financial support and collective action towards recovery they deserve. It is critical that we continue to push forward and ensure these companies remain liable for the immense damage they have caused to families around Howard County and our state.

For these and many more reasons, I urge a favorable report on SB 419.

All the Best,

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive