



House Bill 791

Overdose Response Program – Prescribing and Dispensing of Naloxone – Noncertificate Holders

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

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To: Health and Government Operations Committee

From: Natasha Mehu

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 791 as it endeavors to reduce overdose deaths caused by opioids. The bill provides easier access to naloxone, a medication that can counter an overdose, to individuals who are most able to assist someone at risk of dying from an opioid death when emergency medical services or first responders are not readily available.

HB 791 authorizes naloxone to be prescribed, dispensed, received, possessed, or administered to an individual that has not received training or certification through an overdose response program. Currently, community members must receive hands-on training and certification through the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's (DHMH) Overdose Response Program (ORP) in order to receive the life-saving medication without a prescription. The bill will make it easier for community members to have access to naloxone in cases where they are unable to attend a training through the ORP.

Opioid abuse and addiction continues to be a major public health crisis affecting the welfare of millions of people across the nation. In Maryland, opioid-related deaths and usage continue to rise in epidemic proportions. Naloxone is a safe means of saving lives. It is approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to help prevent overdoses by opioids such as heroin, morphine, and oxycodone by blocking opioid receptor sites, reversing the toxic effects of the overdose. It is not a controlled dangerous substance. There are no adverse effects from use nor does it have any potential for abuse, physical dependence, or overdose. It will neither help nor cause harm if used on someone who is not overdosing from opioids.

The opioid epidemic continues to be a threat to the lives and livelihood of county residents. HB 791 helps streamline access to naloxone and reduce overdose deaths in the process. For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 791.