



House Bill 924

Emergency Medical Care – Administration of Opioid Antidotes - Immunity

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Judiciary and Health and Government
Operations Committees

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From: Natasha Mehu

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 924. MACo believes that the bill assists efforts to reduce opioid-related overdose deaths by closing a loophole in the existing immunity provisions for first responders administering treatment to an individual experiencing or believed to be experiencing an overdose.

The opioid crisis continues to be a serious threat to public health and public safety across the state. Despite extensive efforts to curb abuse and distribution, opioid-related deaths continue to rise. As emergency medical services (EMS) providers are often the first to arrive on the scene of a drug overdose, great strides have been made to train and equip them to carry a life-saving medication that reverses an opioid overdose, and to protect them from certain civil liability for providing that life-saving assistance.

HB 924 would clarify that existing immunity protections for EMS providers administering care for an opioid overdose apply to (1) any opioid antidote that has been approved by the federal Food and Drug Administration FDA regardless of dosage amount, and (2) as many doses of the opioid antidote that may be necessary to revive the individual. The FDA sets guidelines regarding the medications and dosages that EMS providers may use in administering care for an overdose. This bill closes an important loophole by ensuring that EMS providers remain covered by the existing protections even if the FDA changes the medication or dosage guidelines.

The protections offered within the bill are not unprecedented. As the state continues to grapple with the opioid crisis, immunities have been put into place to ensure that those who are providing life-saving assistance – and are acting dutifully, responsibly, in good faith, and not grossly negligent administering that assistance – are not open to litigious action for the emergency care they provided.

As part of the continued effort to address opioid overdose deaths, civil immunity protections should be clarified to ensure that EMS providers who are trained and equipped to administer life-saving treatment for an overdose are properly protected for the care they provide. For these reasons MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 924.