



House Bill 1549

Public Health - Drug Overdose Prevention Programs - Revisions

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Health and Government Operations Committee

Date: March 16, 2017

From: Natasha Mehu

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 1549 as it enhances state and local tools for addressing the continuing opioid overdose and addiction crisis.

HB 1549 helps improve the effectiveness of existing Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) programs in a manner that will help to reduce overdose deaths and address addiction. The bill authorizes DHMH to revoke licenses for Controlled Dangerous Substance (CDS) manufacturers, distributors, and dispensers that fail to properly register. This strengthens the Department's ability to enforce compliance and catch rogue businesses that handle highly addictive drugs that are subject to abuse.

The bill also authorizes local overdose fatality review teams to collect and analyze information related to near overdoses. These teams perform confidential reviews of drug and alcohol overdose deaths in order to identify ways to improve system level operations. However, they are currently only able to review fatal overdose data. The information that can be gleaned from an individual that has experienced an overdose, but survived, is valuable for preventing and responding to future overdose events.

Finally, HB 1549 helps to increase access to and streamline education and training on the use of opioid antagonists to counter an overdose. Ensuring that all opioid antagonists, not just naloxone, are recognized by the program and removing the requirement for a certificate removes some limitations and burdens on the overdose response program. It also makes it easier for friends or family members, who are often most able to assist someone at risk of dying from an opioid overdose, to be prepared to do so when emergency medical services or first responders are not readily available.

The opioid epidemic continues to be a threat to the lives and livelihood of all Marylanders. HB 1549 helps to strengthen and improve programs working to address the crisis. For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 1549.