



Senate Bill 846

Public Health - Correctional Services - Opioid Use Disorder Examinations and Treatment

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Judiciary and Health and Government
Operations Committees

Date: April 2, 2019

From: Natasha Mehu

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 846 as it endeavors to create a uniform statewide system for providing medication-assisted treatment (MAT) for opioid use disorders in all local jails and state prisons.

The opioid epidemic continues to plague the state -- both in the community and behind the walls of our correctional facilities. The goals of this bill are to ensure that individuals who are receiving medication-assisted treatment for their opioid use disorder continue to receive that treatment once incarcerated, and that those who are medically assessed upon incarceration as having an opioid use disorder and who qualify for medication-assisted treatment have the opportunity to receive that treatment while incarcerated. Additionally, the bill addresses potential liability issues regarding access to treatment under the American Disabilities Act.

SB 846 would require that all jails and prisons in the state provide inmates with access to FDA-approved drugs for the treatment of opioid use disorders. This includes at least one full opioid agonist (e.g. methadone), one partial agonist (e.g. buprenorphine), and one long-acting antagonist (e.g. naltrexone). It creates a framework for evidence-based screening and assessments and provides comprehensive holistic support by coupling MAT with behavioral health counseling and therapies. As amended, the treatment requirements are phased in beginning with four county jails and expanding to all county jails as well as the Baltimore City Pre-Trial Complex by 2023.

Importantly, this bill appropriately commits the State to funding the opioid use disorder screening, evaluation, and treatment for inmates in state and local facilities. As with many aspects of the criminal justice system, state and local partnership are necessary for successful and effective programs. Currently, there is a patchwork of treatment options on the local level -- where jails provide treatment it is usually through a targeted grant or in limited partnership with their local health department. No local jail currently offers the full scope of services SB 846 envisions. A program on this scale cannot work equitably with piecemeal fiscal support, varying by jurisdiction. State funding ensures that resources are spread to each jurisdiction to support a consistent and strong system across the state.

The opioid crisis must be fought on all fronts for all members of our communities. Accordingly, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 846.