



Senate Bill 967

Heroin and Opioid Prevention Effort (HOPE) and Treatment Act of 2017

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Health and Government Operations Committee

Date: April 6, 2017

From: Natasha Mehu

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 967. This omnibus legislation offers a comprehensive approach for addressing the continuing opioid overdose and addiction problem confronting communities across the state.

Counties support the efforts of SB 967 to provide Maryland residents with greater access to a broader range of treatment services and support. Crisis treatment centers and 24/7 toll-free crisis hotlines provide a means of immediate assistance to individuals in acute emergency situations. Rate adjustments for community behavioral health providers will help these facilities “keep the doors open” and continue to provide vital treatment to patients in need. The bill directs hospitals to have discharge protocols for individuals treated for opioid overdose and directs health benefit plans to provide residential treatment and outpatient treatment services. These are all laudable steps to expanding the availability of and access to treatment services for Marylanders.

As amended and passed by the Senate, the bill addresses counties’ concerns regarding language of the bill that would have set a burdensome mandate on certain health care facilities, including local health departments, to have at least one buprenorphine provider available for every 100 patients served. This mandate would have been extremely difficult to meet.

The amended bill ensures patients have access to the services of healthcare providers that are trained and authorized to prescribe opioid addiction medications, including buprenorphine-containing formulas. To comply with this directive, the facilities have the flexibility to directly employ, contract with, or refer to the appropriate providers. The facilities are not required to meet any specific provider-to-patient threshold. This allows the facilities to provide services in a manner that meets their patients’ needs without overburdening their resources available for doing so.

The opioid epidemic continues to be a threat to the lives and livelihood of Maryland residents. SB 967 helps ensure our communities have access to a range of substance abuse treatments and support services. For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 967.