



Senate Bill 1060

Heroin and Opioid Education and Community Action Act of 2017 *(Start Talking Maryland Act)*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Health and Government Operations Committee

Date: April 6, 2017

From: Natasha Mehu

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 1060 as it seeks to reduce overdose deaths and prevent addiction by focusing on Maryland's public education system as a means for spreading awareness and providing necessary services.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

SB 1060 requires the State Board of Education to develop age appropriate drug addiction and education programs in primary and secondary schools. Teachers for these programs are to be trained in drug addiction and education programs. The program would also include information about the lethality of Fentanyl. This approach recognizes the need to teach children about the dangers of addiction at an early age. The children would gain reasonable knowledge about the issues well before they ever have to confront them in a peer or other setting.

The bill also directs local school boards to have policies for training and authorizing certain school personnel, including nurses, to administer opioid overdose medication to a person who appears to be overdosing on school property. A number of local schools have already taken steps to have staff trained and equipped to take action during an opioid overdose. It is an unfortunate reality that overdoses can occur at any place and time. In the event emergency services are unable to arrive in time, a trained school nurse could save a student's life.

A novel component of SB 1060 requires each local board of education, in collaboration with the local health departments, to either hire community action officials or implement programs to coordinate school-based community forums and conduct public relations efforts. Counties believe this builds upon local school-based awareness campaigns and forums by providing an official that can help coordinate across schools in a county or across county school departments if necessary.

HIGHER EDUCATION

SB 1060 requires higher education institutions that receive state funding to establish heroin and opioid education and prevention policies. The policies shall require special awareness training for incoming students, campus police, and health personnel. While alcohol abuse information has become a staple at college campuses, current circumstances make it clear that freshman also need to receive opioid awareness trainings.

The opioid epidemic continues to be a threat to the lives and livelihood of Maryland residents. SB 1060 uses the state's education system as a base for providing tools and resources to tackle the heroin and opioid epidemic. For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 1060.