

To the Baltimore City Council:

Our organization represents over 900 Baltimore-based individuals who support progressive changes in policy and government. Our particular committee focuses on health justice efforts in the metro area and we fully support efforts to establish overdose prevention sites in Baltimore City.

The human cost of addiction is a pressing issue, especially here at home. According to a February 2020 report from the Baltimore City Health Department (1), almost three times as many people in Baltimore City have lost their lives from overdoses as from homicide. Many of our members have personally and professionally seen the trauma addiction can cause. We have seen the way addiction sufferers are penalized, with criminal sentences and with societal stigmatization, rather than being assisted in their recovery and we want better for those who are suffering. While current initiatives like syringe services programs are a solid start, more governmental support in the public health concern that is addiction is needed.

Overdose prevention sites are one step in providing effective, humane ways to assist those struggling with addiction. Addiction is now widely-understood as an illness, rather than a moral failure as in years past, and it can be recovered from and aided by overdose prevention sites. In a two-year study (2) of a sample of individuals served by the first overdose prevention site in North America, approximately half had entered treatment by the study's end and approximately a quarter had ceased injectable drug use at the end of the two-year study. Overdose prevention sites have proven effective in several other cities worldwide and could be a boon for Baltimore. We urge you to support Baltimore's neighborhoods in establishing overdose prevention sites and providing a much-needed service for those suffering in our city limits.

Respectfully,

The Greater Baltimore Democratic Socialists of America Health Justice Committee

- (1) https://health.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/Opioid%20Epidemic%20Update%202_25_2020.pptx
- (2) DeBeck K, Kerr T, Bird L, et al. Injection drug use cessation and use of North America's first medically supervised safer injecting facility. *Drug Alcohol Depend.* 2011;113(2-3):172-176. doi:10.1016/j.drugalcoholdep.2010.07.023