

HB 1516 - Washington County – Opioid-Associated Disease Prevention and Outreach 3 Program – Prohibition on Establishment



Health and Government Operations Committee
February 28, 2020



HB1516 would exempt a Section 24 Program from occurring in Washington county

- Washington County local officials did not vote to support the program when it began in 2017.
- The Washington County Commissioners voted unanimously to support HB 1516.
- This is a needle giveaway program. No needles to be turned in to receive new needles.
- The program proliferates the number of dangerous syringes in the community.
- Needles are being improperly disposed of in our parks and other places where they become a public safety hazard and have inflicted injury
 - A 2-year old in a park
 - A police officer needle stick when clearing out an old drugs bin.



Section 24 of the Maryland Health Code enables local health departments to establish an Opioid–Associated Disease Prevention and Outreach Program.

- The main element of the program consists of the free distribution at health department facilities of syringes and hypodermic needles.
- The program is intended to reduce the spread of bloodborne diseases like HIV and Hepatitis B & C among intravenous drug users.
- I believe the program was set up with the intention of helping people.



Death from Drug use is now the main public health concern

- The main studies used to justify the program is from the 90's when a main threat was bloodborne diseases.
- Thankfully, medical improvements have meant that people don't die from HIV and Hepatitis at the same rates they used to.
- Now, the main threat is overdose and death from using illegal drugs. The drugs have become more dangerous and introduction of fentanyl has increased risk for overdose death.
- Programs need to emphasis stopping drugs, **not enabling drug use** or making it easier.



Figures From *Mortality Among Young Injection Drug Users in San Francisco: A 10-Year Follow-up of the UFO Study* From The American Journal of Epidemiology

- ▶ Young People who use intravenous drugs are 10 times more likely than those in their age cohort to die
- ▶ 57.9 % Die Directly From Overdose
- ▶ 13.2 % From Self inflicted injury
- ▶ 10.5 % From an accident
 - ▶ This is **81.6% From causes directly attributable to injecting opioids**
- ▶ 13.1 % From a medical condition
 - ▶ This includes preexisting conditions, long term organ damage, HIV and Hepatitis, or any other cause not an overdose, injury, or accident



Written Testimony Provided to Committee:

- Concerned citizens from across Maryland submitted testimony to the committee expressing their concerns.
- Testimony comes from:
 - Concerned Parents
 - Former drug addicts,
 - Friends and relatives of illegal drug users who have passed away or are currently still in addiction
 - Good neighbors who have helped clean up used discarded needles in parks and other public places.
 - Washington County Commissioners
 - Sheriff Chuck Jenkins

What does the program distribute? Basically Provides a Drug Starter Kit.

- When my aide, Nick Allman, went to the Health Department to see the program in action in 15 minutes he was in and out of the health department where we was not just given free syringes but a whole host of drug paraphernalia.
- They gave him tourniquets to tie his arm with, cookers to use to melt down crystalized drugs to later inject, saline solution, among other items.
- **Distribution of other drug paraphernalia** like tourniquets and cookers was not explicitly permitted by the enabling legislation. The health department is going above and beyond the intended scope of the program.
- He was never asked for any kind of ID. He could have easily been a minor and the distribution center is close to a high school.
- Narcan is provided in the kit. This acknowledges that the main problem is drug overdosing
- On his way out he was given a packet with useless items inside like a drink coaster and a picture of a tree. **Nothing in the packet included a link to any kind of substance related disorder counseling, treatment, or recovery service.**



What is the biggest problem: Proposed Amendment to HB 1516

- Make the bill a statewide bill.
- Require that each and every time someone receives a free needle they are provided with proper and substantial information on how to immediately seek treatment.
- Explicitly ban the distribution of drug paraphernalia like burners and tourniquets through the program



Proposed Amendment #2 to HB 1516

- This amendment would make the distribution of needles as a part of the program optional.
- The amendment would also require local county government approval before needles would be a part of the program.



Please Consider Voting Favorably For HB 1516 as Amended

- ▶ Amendment #1 is critical to improving the program that already exists.
 - ▶ Would require giving information that could help people get off of drugs in order to save lives.
 - ▶ Would eliminate the distribution of drug paraphernalia as a part of the program.
- ▶ Amendment #2 would give local government more authority over how the program is administered.