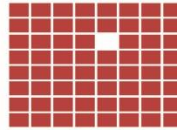




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TO: The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
Members, House Health and Government Operations Committee
The Honorable Rick Impallaria

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
Danna L. Kauffman

DATE: February 21, 2017

RE: **OPPOSE** – House Bill 661 – *Public Health – Suspected Overdoses – Reporting Requirement*

The Maryland State Medical Society, the Maryland Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians, and the Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers submit this letter of **opposition** for House Bill 661.

House Bill 661 requires a healthcare practitioner to contact the county sheriff or county police in which the overdose is suspected of occurring or the State police within 48-hours of treating a person believed to have overdosed on a Schedule I drug. It is presumed that the intention of the sponsor is to assist in addressing the overdose crisis. However, despite the notable intentions of the sponsor, there are a number of unintended consequences that defeat the presumed objectives.

The reporting requirement violates existing patient confidentiality requirements that must be adhered to by health care professionals and interferes with the appropriate role of the physician in the physician-patient relationship. The legislation also runs counter to the growing body of evidence that there is a need to shift from a focus on law enforcement to treatment if we are to effectively address overdose rates. Most important, the legislation may have the unintended consequence of increasing deaths from overdose. If a person using a Schedule I drug believes they will be reported to law enforcement if they seek medical care, it is highly likely they will avoid accessing necessary medical services. Failure to access care when experiencing an overdose will unquestionably increase deaths and will prevent these individuals from being referred to substance use services that may assist in addressing their drug use.

If the objective is to gain a greater understanding of drug use by law enforcement in order to address overdose rates, it would be better to work with the County Health Department in the development of a data collection system that does not violate patient confidentiality but provides statistics that could be used to design programs to address the overdose incidences. For the reasons stated above, an unfavorable report is requested.

For more information call:

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