

MedChi

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TO: The Honorable Thomas M. Middleton, Chair
Members, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Brian J. Feldman

FROM: Richard A. Tabuteau
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DATE: February 7, 2018

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 288 – *Public Health – Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Supervised Drug Consumption Facility Program*

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), which represents more than 7,000 Maryland physicians and their patients, **supports** Senate Bill 288.

This legislation provides that a community-based organization may establish an Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Supervised Drug Consumption Facility Program in one or more counties with the approval of the Department of Health, in consultation with the local health department. The program must provide a location supervised by health care professionals or other trained staff where drug users can consume preobtained drugs. The program must also provide sterile injection supplies, information regarding safe injection practices, and referrals to obtain naloxone and treatment services.

According to the February 2017 Abell Foundation Report, about 19,000 people inject drugs in Baltimore City. Although hundreds of people suffer overdose deaths each year, thousands more experience nonfatal overdose, skin and soft tissue infections, and are at risk for infectious diseases due to unsafe and unsterilized injection environments.

The first official supervised drug consumption facility opened in Berne, Switzerland in 1986. Today, there are 97 facilities in 66 cities in 11 countries, with an additional seven planned to open in Canada alone. A large body of evidence-based, peer-reviewed studies demonstrate that people who utilize these facilities take better care of themselves; use their drugs more safely; and have better access to medical, social, and drug treatment services.

MedChi recognizes this research and the potential that these facilities can reduce the costs associated with this public health crisis. For these reasons, MedChi would ask for a favorable report on Senate Bill 288.

For more information call:

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