



House Bill 48 Public Health - Maryland Suicide Fatality Review Committee

House Health and Government Operations Committee January 26, 2022

SUPPORT

MDDCSAM is the Maryland state chapter of the American Society of Addiction Medicine whose members are physicians and other health providers who treat people with substance use disorders.

As an addiction medicine physician, I can attest to the extensive overlap between co-occurring mental health disorders and substance use disorders. The suicide risk among our patients with addiction disorders is high. A portion of overdose deaths are suicides. Also, overdose is more likely among patients with co-occurring depression that may be unrecognized or untreated.

As a volunteer member of an Overdose Fatality Review Committee in Harford County, I can attest to the effectiveness of such committees in identifying patterns and elements of service delivery that may prevent future cases.

It is not widely recognized that a significant portion of suicides are preventable. Screening is an example of an evidence-based, cost-effective prevention strategy.

Testimony submitted on this bill last year provided examples of Suicide Fatality Review Committees in other states (Oregon, New Hampshire, and Kentucky) which identified specific factors leading to suicide prevention strategies in those states.

It is tragic that often-preventable suicides are on the rise. The establishment of a Maryland Suicide Fatality Review Committee would facilitate system changes by identifying factors and trends that can inform suicide prevention activities.

Respectfully,

Joseph A. Adams, MD, FASAM
Chair, Public Policy Committee.
