



March 28, 2018

HB 1744 Child Abuse and Neglect – Substance Exposed Newborns - Reporting
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

OPPOSE

The Maryland-DC Society of Addiction Medicine (MDDCSAM) is a professional society of physicians and associated health professionals in the field of addiction medicine; a chapter of the American Society of Addiction Medicine.

MDDCSAM is extremely concerned that the enhanced reporting mandated in this bill will exacerbate stigma, which already prevents many people with substance use disorder from seeking addiction treatment. It is likely that it will also cause some women to postpone prenatal care.

It is not uncommon for pregnant women to attempt to come off of life-saving medically assisted treatment unnecessarily, due to fear (often unjustified) that Child Protective Services may separate them from their newborns.

It is a high priority to keep pregnant women with opioid use disorder in medication assisted treatment according to federal regulations of Opioid Treatment Programs (CSAT: Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, a division of SAMHSA, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration). The added stigma resulting from unnecessary additional reporting and monitoring may lead to the unintended consequence of withdrawal from treatment and relapse. Relapse in a pregnant woman would be a disastrous outcome.

It is routine and commonplace to treat pregnant women in Opioid Treatment Programs. These women are generally stable and followed regularly by obstetricians who are well-versed in standard procedures for monitoring for and treating, if necessary, fetal abstinence syndrome. This monitoring and treatment is a routine part of obstetric care.

Unfortunately, persons with substance use disorder still experience inappropriate judgement and disrespectful treatment, even from some healthcare and social service professionals, and could be at risk for harmful criminal justice interventions or arbitrary decisions by well-meaning social service professionals. Even the fear of being judged, in and of itself, may lead to these unintended consequences.

MDDCAM urges an unfavorable report on HB 1744
