

HB 947 Maryland Transit Administration – Disabled Reduced Fare Program for Opioid Treatment Program Patients – Modifications Environment and Transportation Committee. Hearing : 2/18/2021

SUPPORT

As the medical director of an opioid treatment program (OTP), I can attest to the burdens faced by many patients in traveling across town to obtain a reduced fare bus pass, which the great majority of patients need to do in many OTPs. The trip can take most of a day, and may interfere with job attendance.

ACCESS TO TREATMENT:

The high travel burden associated with treatment in OTPs affects treatment retention, quality of life, and can be a significant barrier to treatment. (1) Federal regulations require patients to travel to the OTP six days a week for the first 90 days of treatment, five days a week for the next 90 days, with ongoing frequent required visits for many patients.

Because methadone has the strongest evidence base for positive outcomes, it has been called the ‘gold standard’ for the treatment of opioid use disorder (OUD) (2) and is listed by the World Health Organization as an essential medication. Methadone is only available for OUD in OTPs (which can dispense buprenorphine as well).

REDUCING OVERDOSES:

Expanded treatment for OUD, particularly with medication assisted treatment, is one of the important evidence-based strategies to reduce overdose rates, according to both the CDC and SAMHSA: the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (3) (4). Since medication assisted treatment is under-utilized, addressing barriers to treatment is one of the most promising ways of reducing overdose.

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1. Pullen, E. et al. 2014. Barriers to substance abuse treatment in rural and urban communities: counselor perspectives. *Subst. Use Misuse* 49 (7), 891–901. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.3109/10826084.2014.891615>
2. Stotts AL, et al. Opioid dependence treatment: options in pharmacotherapy. *Expert Opin Pharmacother*. 2009;10(11):1727-1740. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/26302889_Opioid_Dependence_Treatment_Options_In_Pharmacotherapy
3. Evidence-Based Strategies for Preventing Opioid Overdose: What’s Working in the United States. (2018) <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/pdf/pubs/2018-evidence-based-strategies.pdf>
4. SAMHSA Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Opioid-Overdose-Prevention-Toolkit/SMA18-4742>
