



Maryland
Hospital Association

**Senate Bill 97 Public Health – Opioid-Associated Disease Prevention
and Outreach Programs**

Position: *Support*

Bill Summary

SB 97 would authorize the establishment of state-level opioid-associated disease prevention and outreach programs and require such programs to provide for the exchange of used hypodermic needles and syringes.

MHA Position

Maryland's opioid problem, heroin use in particular, has reached epidemic proportions: Heroin deaths in Maryland have more than doubled since 2010. Because intravenous injection is the primary vehicle for users, and because users often share needles, they face additional health risks from diseases that can be easily transmitted via blood, such as HIV, AIDS and Hepatitis C. According to the Centers for Disease Control, approximately one-third of active injection drug users aged 18-30 have contracted Hepatitis C.

Maryland's hospitals, in their work to keep entire communities healthy, view needle exchanges as essential components of public health. They are both a means to reduce the transmission of blood-borne disease and to provide screenings, long-term outreach and comprehensive services to those in need. According to the World Health Organization, needle exchange programs are effective and efficient ways to combat myriad disease outbreaks. Closer to home, exchange programs like the one in the City of Baltimore have contributed to a decrease in the incidence of HIV and Hepatitis C.

The ancillary benefits of exchange programs are highly valuable – reduced crime rates, enhanced data collection for patients at risk and ensuring the proper disposal of contaminated syringes also make this initiative worthwhile.

For these reasons, we urge you to give SB 97 a *favorable* report.