



House Bill 980

Public Health – Opioid Restitution Advisory Council and Fund - Revisions

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Health and Government Operations
Committee

Date: February 28, 2024

From: Sarah Sample

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 980. This bill adds an additional layer of requirements around the use and reporting of funds from the state opioid settlements. County opposition to this bill centers on the unnecessary procedural requirements and its mandated allocation of a minimum share of funds from the State's Opioid Restitution Fund to a certain set of providers.

The emotional, physical, and financial damage inflicted on communities across Maryland by the opioid crisis is almost incalculable. The remediation efforts, while extensive, may never allow families and individuals to recover what they've lost. Federal, state, and local governments, as well as community stakeholders, are the cornerstone of the progress that can be achieved. These are efforts that require an extensive level of collaboration and accountability, which is what the settlement agreements explicitly mandate and require.

HB 980 adds redundant standards, procedures, and requirements that have the potential to conflict with and, in some instances, counter the existing legal mandates in current law. Further, the bill creates a mandate for the State to set aside 25 percent of the Opioid Restitution Fund for community-based recovery organizations, rather than requiring that their grant applications be considered amongst the entire competitive pool of applicants, including local governments.

Abiding by the already stringent requirements of the settlement agreements is the necessary framework for rolling out resources and services for individuals and at-risk communities struggling with the opioid crisis. This is not to say additional provisions might not be prudent in the future, but the implementation efforts with settlement funds are in their infancy. Making changes before the process is fully underway could squander valuable time, especially as sufficient safeguards already exist.

While counties appreciate the need for collaboration with community providers, they oppose uniform mandated funding to any one segment of the potential programs or recipients. Accordingly, MACo urges an **UNFAVORABLE** report for HB 980.