



# Virginia Society of Addiction Medicine

*A Chapter of American Society of Addiction Medicine*

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January 20, 2020

The Honorable Charniele L. Herring  
Chair, Courts of Justice  
Virginia House of Delegates  
900 East Main Street  
Pocahontas Building, Room E606  
Richmond, VA 23219

Re: Support for HB532

Dear Chair Herring and members of the Committee on Courts of Justice,

On behalf of the Virginia Society of Addiction Medicine, the medical specialty society representing physicians and clinicians in Virginia who specialize in the treatment of addiction, I write to provide our support for HB532, which expands Good Samaritan protections for individuals seeking medical attention for a drug or alcohol-related overdose.

VASAM is dedicated to increasing access to and improving the quality of addiction treatment for patients in Virginia. To that end, we are wholeheartedly committed to advocating for a state addiction treatment system that prevents overdose deaths and encourages patients to seek evidence-based, comprehensive addiction treatment. HB532 aims to reduce overdose deaths by expanding the legal protections extended to individuals seeking care for an alcohol or drug-related overdose. Good Samaritan protections, such as those proposed by HB532, encourage Virginians to seek care for themselves and others in the event of an overdose by eliminating the fear that soliciting help may lead to prosecution. VASAM supports these policies because they have been demonstrated to encourage individuals to seek care following an overdose and reduce opioid overdose deaths.<sup>i</sup> A recent study examining the implementation of Good Samaritan protections found that the adoption of such laws was associated with up to an 11% reduction in opioid overdose deaths, while not contributing to an increase in misuse of prescription opioids.<sup>ii</sup>

VASAM shares the state of Virginia's goal of preventing alcohol and drug-related overdose deaths. Although Virginia has taken great strides to build out its treatment system and respond to the needs of Virginians with addiction, HB532 would go even further to encourage individuals to seek life-saving care. As a result, we offer our support for HB532 and strongly recommend its passage. Please do not hesitate to contact me if VASAM can be of any assistance.

Sincerely,

Jonathan C. Lee, MD  
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757-565-0106

CC:

The Honorable Vice Chair Vivian Watts  
The Honorable Jeff Bourne  
The Honorable Jennifer Carroll Foy  
The Honorable Karrie Delaney  
The Honorable Steve Heretick  
The Honorable Patrick Hope

The Honorable Mark Levine  
The Honorable Joe Lindsey  
The Honorable Mike Mullin  
The Honorable Don Scott  
The Honorable Marcus Simon  
The Honorable Rip Sullivan  
The Honorable Les Adams  
The Honorable Rob Bell  
The Honorable Ronnie Campbell  
The Honorable Jeff Campbell  
The Honorable Chris Collins  
The Honorable Terry Kilgore  
The Honorable Jay Leftwich  
The Honorable Jason Miyares  
The Honorable Margaret Ransone  
The Honorable Betsy Carr  
The Honorable Kaye Kory

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<sup>i</sup> American Society of Addiction Medicine Public Policy Statement on Use of Naloxone for the prevention of Opioid Overdose Deaths, available at: <https://www.asam.org/advocacy/find-a-policy-statement/view-policy-statement/public-policy-statements/2014/08/28/use-of-naloxone-for-the-prevention-of-drug-overdose-deaths>.

<sup>ii</sup> Rees, D. I., Sabia, J. J., Argys, L. M., Latshaw, J., & Dave, D. (2017). With a little help from my friends: The effects of naloxone access and Good Samaritan laws on opioid-related deaths. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.