



**Testimony for the House Judiciary Committee
March 17, 2015**

**HB 1009 – Criminal Procedure – Immunity – Alcohol- or Drug-related
Medical Emergencies**

SUPPORT

The ACLU of Maryland supports HB 1009, which would extend our “Good Samaritan” law, allowing for people to seek medical assistance for alcohol- or drug-related medical emergencies without fearing prosecution.

Drug overdoses have tripled since 1990, primarily as a result of prescription drug abuse.¹ Unintentional drug overdose is a leading cause of preventable death in the United States. It is well documented that people may not call for medical assistance for fear of being arrested for drug-related crimes. Good Samaritan policies are life-saving measures that enable people to make responsible decisions by shielding them from punishment when they call for medical help during an emergency relating to alcohol or other drugs.

Twenty-two states – including Maryland – and the District of Columbia have enacted some form of a Good Samaritan law.² HB 1009 would provide an important expansion to our law, extend it to immunity from arrest or charge, in addition to criminal prosecution, and ensuring that both people who are experiencing the medical emergency and those who seek, provide or assist in the provision of medical assistance are covered. Further, it would extend the immunity to violations of pretrial release, probation or parole and bar detention on an outstanding warrant if the detention was made possible solely as a result of the call for medical assistance.

HB 1009 can save lives. With the number of drug overdoses, coupled with the rising rates of heroin use, we must encourage people to seek medical help without fear of prosecution.

For the foregoing reasons, the ACLU of Maryland supports HB 1009.

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¹ <http://www.ncsl.org/research/civil-and-criminal-justice/drug-overdose-immunity-good-samaritan-laws.aspx>

² *Id.*