

MLA Advocacy - April 26, 2018



On Tuesday, the Senate Health Policy Committee took testimony on SB 828 and 829, which would provide liability protection for libraries when providing the life-saving opioid antidote naloxone, common brand name Narcan, to an overdosing patron.

Kristin Shelley, MLA Legislative Committee Chair and MLA President-elect gave an excellent overview of why the bills are needed. She also provided a heart wrenching story of a death that occurred at a library where she worked years ago. The committee heard first hand how a life might have been saved if naloxone had been available then.

Library of Michigan, the Michigan Department of Education and MLA have been working together to see this protection added for our libraries. It also is possible that amendments will be added that could expand the bills to provide liability protection when naloxone is administered in any public space not only libraries. We expect further action on the bills soon.

In the United States, it is reported that a person dies of an opioid overdose every thirteen minutes. While they happen everywhere, it's been impossible to miss the stories of overdoses happening in the restrooms and parking lots of public libraries especially in New York, Philadelphia and Denver. There, librarians have administered life-saving Narcan on a weekly and sometimes daily basis.

Unfortunately, libraries across the country have become a common site for opioid and heroin overdoses. Libraries throughout Michigan have been the sites of overdoses in recent years. Luckily in those cases, law enforcement officers responded quickly enough to administer Narcan before it was too late. Those libraries now train staff and stock the Narcan kits as do many libraries across the state.

Libraries, however, do not have immunity for any liability situations that could arise from providing this life-saving treatment. As a result, library attorneys are often recommending that

libraries not stock the treatment.

SB 828 and 829 would allow libraries and library employees or agents to purchase, possess, distribute or administer in good faith an opioid antagonist without possible subject to criminal prosecution. The law would provide immunity to libraries similar to that provided to public schools.

In response to the increasing number of heroin and opioid overdoses in libraries across the country, Representative Sean Patrick Maloney of New York introduced the Life-saving Librarians Act which directs the Secretary of Health and Human Services to establish a grant program to allow public libraries in High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas to purchase naloxone rescue kits and/or provide training to enable employees to use naloxone rescue kits. These would likely be available to qualifying Michigan communities.

While no one wants to be in a position to have to administer this life-saving drug, the fact is our librarians are on the front line dealing with this issue on a regular basis. Providing libraries with protection from civil and criminal liability like that afforded to schools would assist in making sure libraries are able to more easily access and administer to opioid overdoses in and around the library.

What do we know about the opioid crisis?

- 115 people die each day of opioid overdose.
- Roughly 21 to 29 percent of patients prescribed opioids for chronic pain misuse them.
- Between 8 and 12 percent develop an opioid use disorder
- An estimated 4 to 6 percent who misuse prescription opioids transition to heroin. Opioid overdoses increased 30 percent from July 2016 through September 2017 in 52 areas in 45 states.
- The Midwestern region saw opioid overdoses increase 70 percent from July 2016 through September 2017.
- Opioid overdoses in large cities increase by 54 percent in 16 states from July 2016 through September 2017.

[Advocacy Update Home](#)

[Back to news](#)