



**House Health and Government Operations Committee
February 28, 2020**

**House Bill 464
Public Health - Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program
Support**

NCADD-Maryland supports House Bill 464. The creation of an Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program is a harm reduction strategy whereby people who consume drugs, can do so under clinical supervision. The primary purpose of this is to provide immediate assistance in the case of an overdose.

Along with direct assistance in saving people's lives, these programs, as proposed in HB 464, would also avail people of:

- First aid and care for wounds;
- Sterile syringes and their collection;
- Referral to services for substance use disorders, HIV, hepatitis, sexually transmitted diseases, reproductive health care, and wound care; and
- Education regarding the risk of overdoses and the transmission of various infectious diseases.

These programs could also coordinate efforts with syringe services programs that are being created around the state, thanks to the legislation introduced by Governor Hogan in 2016 and passed by this General Assembly.

There are more than 100 such programs in jurisdictions around the world, and a number of cities in the United States are moving toward establishing them. These kinds of programs have been researched and evaluated for years. Multiple studies show that they reduce the sharing of syringes, and therefore of the transmission of HIV and hepatitis. Research also shows a reduction in overdose deaths, public injections, discarded syringes, and an increase in the number of people who enter substance use disorder treatment.

As another step toward reducing opioid overdose deaths and addressing the public health consequences of the crisis we face, we urge a favorable report on HB 464.

The Maryland Affiliate of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD-Maryland) is a statewide organization that works to influence public and private policies on addiction, treatment, and recovery, reduce the stigma associated with the disease, and improve the understanding of addictions and the recovery process. We advocate for and with individuals and families who are affected by alcoholism and drug addiction.