



**House Ways & Means Committee
February 15, 2023**

**House Bill 488
Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program –
Mental Health Professionals in Public Schools
Support with Amendments**

NCADD-Maryland supports House Bill 488 to expand the Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program (LARP) to those mental health professionals working in public schools. The workforce shortage in health care is widespread and many tools are needed to help people choose to work in certain settings, including providing services to young people in schools.

Because substance use is addressed in school settings as a disciplinary problem, as opposed to a public health problem, there remains a great stigma that keeps people, including youth, in hiding and averse to seeking help. This leads to far worse outcomes for young people. Most mental health professionals are trained in identifying substance use disorders, but the continued focus on “mental health” sometimes inadvertently excludes those providing substance use disorder treatment or preventative services.

We therefore ask that there be an amendment to clarify that substance use services be included:

On page 2 in line 10, after the word “HEALTH” insert “AND SUBSTANCE USE”

With this change, we urge a favorable report on House Bill 488.

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.