



**House Appropriations Committee
February 28, 2024**

**House Bill 980 – Public Health - Opioid Restitution Advisory
Council and Fund – Revisions**

Support

NCADD-Maryland strongly supports House Bill 980 which adds additional transparency and timeframes to the spending decisions related to the Opioid Restitution Fund (ORF). It also requires a set-aside for community recovery organizations that generally do not have access to other sources of ongoing funding from the State.

The number of overdose deaths in Maryland in August of 2023 increased by nearly 3% compared to August of 2022. The tens of millions of dollars coming to the state from the opioid manufacturers must be spent on activities that provide intervention, treatment and recovery support services.

Transparency of how settlement dollars are spent is an issue for states across the country. While we believe there is adequate transparency on how the state spends money, HB 980 proposes to add additional transparency to the money being spent by county and municipal governments that receive money directly from the settlements. We understand local governments are already required to provide reporting under the terms of the settlements. We believe making sure these reports are also shared with the Maryland Department of Health should not be an added burden. Further, the information should be easily accessible and posted on the Department's website.

The creation of the ORF's Advisory Council was intended to provide a level of transparency and community input into how money is spent from the State pot. This Advisory Council has made recommendations to the Secretary and Governor, and we await their decisions about the spending. House Bill 980 would add timeframes to those decision disclosures.

Finally, we are seeking to direct at least 25% of the funds to support community-based recovery organizations in Maryland. These organizations are nonprofits that are founded and led

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by members the local recovery community, and provide non-clinical substance use recovery support services at no cost to the participant. These organizations provide a variety of essential services, including case management, peer support, funding for housing, and much more. Unlike services various treatment programs that are supported by Medicaid, recovery organizations depend on small grants and donations to remain open. We believe ensuring that there is a relatively stable pot of funds they can access on a competitive basis will improve their efficacy.

Maryland must continue to invest in treatment, peer support, prevention, harm reduction, and recovery support services. We believe HB 980 supports these efforts and we urge a favorable report.