



**House Health & Government Operations Committee  
March 13, 2025**

**House Bill 690 - Overdose Awareness Day  
Support**

NCADD-Maryland strongly supports House Bill 690 to officially recognize August 31st as Overdose Awareness Day in Maryland. Since 2001, communities worldwide have observed this day to remember those lost to overdoses and to raise awareness about the ongoing crisis. Every year, events are held in cities and towns across the globe to honor lives lost, support those affected, and advocate for policies that improve prevention, treatment, and recovery efforts.

Maryland continues to face a significant public health challenge due to drug overdoses. According to the Maryland Department of Health's latest data, from February 2024 to January 2025, there were 1,499 total overdose deaths in the state, with 1,255 deaths related to opioids and 1,145 linked specifically to fentanyl. Cocaine-related overdoses accounted for 736 deaths, highlighting the prevalence of polysubstance use. These figures underscore the need for continued investment in education, prevention, and intervention efforts. Establishing Overdose Awareness Day will send a strong message that the state is committed to addressing this crisis, supporting affected families, and ensuring that resources reach those in need.

Encouragingly, recent data suggests that Maryland is making progress in reducing overdose deaths. Overdose fatalities declined by 34.8% in 2024, marking a significant improvement after years of increases. This positive trend reflects the effectiveness of public health initiatives, harm reduction programs, and policy interventions that have been implemented to combat substance use disorder. However, the crisis is far from over, and continued awareness and action are necessary to sustain this momentum. Recognizing Overdose Awareness Day at the state level will help reinforce the importance of these efforts while providing an annual opportunity to educate the public and honor the lives lost.

One of the most significant barriers to addressing substance use disorder is the stigma that prevents individuals from seeking help. Many people struggling with addiction experience feelings of shame, guilt, and isolation, making it more difficult for them to access treatment and support. Overdose Awareness Day will serve as a platform to educate communities about addiction as a medical condition, reduce stigma, and foster an environment in which individuals feel safe seeking help. It will also provide an opportunity to support families and friends who have lost loved ones to overdose, recognizing their grief and acknowledging the devastating impact of substance use disorder on communities across Maryland.

*(over)*

NCADD-Maryland firmly believes that greater attention to this crisis is essential. While progress is being made, the need for ongoing advocacy, education, and policy action remains critical. We urge your strong support for House Bill 690 to help ensure Maryland remains committed to preventing overdoses, expanding access to treatment, and supporting those affected by addiction.

