



**Senate Finance Committee  
February 18, 2020**

**Senate Bill 520  
Behavioral Health Programs - Opioid Treatment Services –  
Limitation on Licenses**

**Oppose**

NCADD-Maryland opposes Senate Bill 520. Limiting life-saving health services is bad public health policy. It is natural and important for communities to care about the condition of their neighborhoods and the impact of the services or other businesses around them. Any service provider, retail store or food establishment should be a good neighbor and not just provide value to a neighborhood, but also ensure it does not create harm.

Most opioid treatment programs (OTPs) are good neighbors. They have community relations plans that involve any number of policies:

- Having community members on their Boards of Directors;
- Being members of their local community associations;
- Staff to monitor the activities of clients outside the program;
- Well publicized phone number with someone at the program who can address concerns; and
- Participating in community events.

We know there is stigma attached to the disease of addiction and to the use of medications to treat it. While some problems experienced in neighborhoods are connected to a particular OTP, many are not. It is typical for any problem in a community to be blamed on an OTP and its clients. Research has demonstrated that OTPs do not bring crime<sup>i</sup> and do not lower property values.<sup>ii</sup>

This is not to discount the real problems in any neighborhood. And sometimes an OTP – or any service provider or other business – isn't a good neighbor. In the case of state-licensed health care programs, the local jurisdiction and the State should have a well-publicized complaint number for community members to call and the process for follow up should be transparent.

(over)

OTPs are the most regulated health care program. When there is a problem as a result of something an OTP is or is not doing, local and State officials have tools to enforce laws and regulations. If they are not, the solution is fixing that enforcement process, not policies that punish the programs doing what they should and limiting access to care.

Finally, the bill proposes a policy that would violate the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Treatment programs are part of the solution to substance use disorders. They need to be accessible and they need to be good neighbors. Bad actors exist in any service sector. The solution is enforcing existing laws and regulations. For programs not meeting standards, providing the technical assistance needed to improve conditions and creating corrective action plans should be the priority, both for the safety and quality of care for the program's clients as well as the community.

We request an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 520.

*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.*

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<sup>i</sup> Furr-Holden, Ph.D., et al, The Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, "[Not in My Back Yard: A Comparative Analysis of Crime Around Publicly Funded Drug Treatment Centers, Liquor Stores, Convenience Stores, and Corner Stores in One Mid-Atlantic City](#)," January 2016.

<sup>ii</sup> Horn, et al, The National Bureau of Economic Research, "[Substance Use Disorder Treatment Centers and Property Values](#)," January 2019.