



**Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
January 20, 2021**

**Senate Bill 243
Public High Schools - Health Education - Gambling Dangers and Addiction**

Support

NCADD-Maryland supports Senate Bill 243. Making sure young people are taught the potential dangers of gambling is the first step in prevention. Problem gambling is a serious problem that damages families across the state. With the State continuing to expand opportunities for legal gambling, it is incumbent on law makers and our education system to give young people the tools they need to make smart choices.

According to the National Council on Problem Gambling:

- 60% to 80% of students between the ages of 12 and 17 have gambled for money in the past year;
- 4-5% of youth meet one or more criteria of having a gambling problem; and
- An additional 10-14% of youth are at risk of developing an addiction, which means that they already show signs of losing control over their gambling behavior.

Maryland's own Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling has developed and promotes the MD-Smart Choices Problem Gambling Prevention Program (Smart Choices) and has adapted the program into curriculum used in a number of public schools in Maryland. The legislation proposed would ensure all children are taught about resiliency and refusal skills critical to responsible decision making for today's youth.

We urge your support of Senate Bill 243.

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.