



**Senate Finance Committee
February 2, 2021**

**Senate Bill 5
Public Health - Implicit Bias Training and the Office of Minority Health and
Health Disparities
Support**

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the pre-existing opioid overdose death fatality crisis has worsened. In Maryland, third quarter data from the Maryland Department of Health shows a 14% increase in the number of opioid overdose deaths in 2020, over the same period the year before. There are also disturbing trends in the impact of the crisis on communities of color. This is just one aspect of the health disparities that exist that must be addressed.

Senate Bill 5 is an important component of a legislative package to advance health equity in Maryland. The bill requires all licensed health care practitioners to complete implicit bias training upon their next licensure renewal cycle. The timeline conveys the urgency of the addressing implicit bias within the health care system. The bill also ensures that there is sufficient funding for the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities.

The State must develop specific strategies to address the worsening overdose death crisis among Black and Brown people. Enhancing the funding of the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities as well as requiring specific training are just two basic steps in prioritizing this policy commitment by Maryland.

We urge a favorable report on SB 5.

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.