



**Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee
March 8, 2022**

**Senate Bill 856
Public Schools – Health Services – School Nurses
Support**

The Maryland Affiliate of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD-Maryland) supports Senate Bill 856 to require each local board of education in the state to provide a full-time registered nurse in each school.

There has been a significant increase in attention to the needs of children and youth since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. These needs include young people's physical health as well as their mental health. Mental health and substance use problems have increased because of the stress and anxiety families have faced amidst a worldwide pandemic.

Schools are often on the front line when it comes to addressing behavioral health problems experienced by young people. While registered nurses are not generally trained in mental health and substance use disorder treatment, they are trained to conduct basic health assessments and can recognize when additional services are needed.

It is important that our schools have an adequate amount of support services that our children need. At the same time, a school nurse or a school social worker cannot and should not take the place of community-based services that can more comprehensively meet the mental health and substance use needs of children and their families. Ensuring our schools have the capacity to provide crisis support and identify and refer youth and their families to appropriate care in the community is essential to the well-being of our communities.

The cost of having a nurse in every school pales in comparison to the money we spend now with other emergency interventions. The value of our children's health is immeasurable. We urge your support of Senate Bill 856.

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.