



**Senate Finance Committee
March 30, 2022**

**House Bill 971
Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Substance Abuse Treatment –
Network Adequacy**

Support with Amendments

The Maryland Affiliate of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD-Maryland) supports House Bill 971 to create in Maryland a full continuum of substance use disorder treatment for young people enrolled in Medicaid. We ask for two important amendments. The first is to make this an emergency bill and the second is to direct funding immediately to pay for treatment for young people with substance use disorders.

Over the last few years, there has been a swift, steady, and dramatic reduction in substance use disorder services for young people in Maryland. Both outpatient and residential levels of care have either ended their treatment services for adolescents, or they have completely closed. We know the alternatives when a young person cannot enter treatment are inappropriate and expensive visits to emergency rooms, commitments to juvenile detention, or death.

Nationally, while drug use among minors was trending down before the pandemic, overdoses among young people was on the increase. Maryland data shows an 8% increase in the number of people under 25 who died of overdoses in the first two quarters of 2021 over the previous year.

While House Bill 971 seems to mandate services be available, the fiscal note shows that the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) will not provide services until a needs assessment is completed. **This is unacceptable.** Services are needed now. We ask that the bill be made an emergency bill and that the funding provided by the Governor for FY 2023 for purposes of a needs assessment be used to provide treatment to young people who are currently seeking services. In addition, we request the term substance “abuse” be replaced with the clinically appropriate phrase “substance use disorders” where it appears in the bill and the title.

With these amendments, we urge your support of House Bill 971.