



**Senate Education, Energy & the Environment Committee
February 8, 2023**

**Senate Bill 263
Maryland Higher Education Commission
Access to Mental Health Advisory Committee - Establishment**

Support with Amendments

NCADD-Maryland supports Senate Bill 263 with several amendments offered below. We appreciate the bill's approach to identifying existing policies, barriers and best practices when it comes to helping students in our institutions of higher education access mental health services. We urge that this group's purpose be expanded to include issues related to substance use disorders.

Specifically, NCADD-Maryland proposed this Advisory Committee specifically look at the policies in place that discourage young adults from seeking assistance when there is a medical emergency related to the use of alcohol or drugs. After many years of advocacy, Maryland finally passed a "Good Samaritan" law in 2014 to give people legal protections if they are involved in such a situation. One of the lead advocates was a man who lost his son to an alcohol overdose at frat house on a college campus. The others at the party were too scared to call for help for fear of getting into trouble, and the young man died.

This story happens over and over again, and while people now have legal protections as an incentive to call for help, reports are that on college campuses, such reports can lead to various punitive and disciplinary actions against both the people experiencing the medical emergency and those calling for help. We believe colleges and universities should take a look at their own policies and what public health experts have cited as best practices, especially in light of the opioid overdose crisis that still grips our state.

The national groups Students for Sensible Drug Policy identify several components related to best practices, including having:

- A medical amnesty policy, similar to Good Samaritan;
- Evidence-based drug and alcohol education;
- Naloxone access on campus; and

- Policies that do not rely on academic, legal, or financial sanctions which only serve to stigmatize and isolate people who may need help

We therefore ask for the following two amendments:

- 1) On page 3 after line 22 insert:

(7) STUDY THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES ADOPTED BY INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE REGARDING THE RESPONSE TO INCIDENTS OF MEDICAL EMERGENCIES THAT OCCUR AS A RESULT OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE

- 2) On page 4 after line 2 insert:

(V) POLICIES THAT PRIORITIZE THE HEALTH OF STUDENTS AND ENCOURAGE CALLS FOR ASSISTANCE IN MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE EMERGENCIES

With these amendments, we urge a favorable report on SB 263.