



**Senate Finance Committee**

**February 15, 2023**

**Senate Bill 281**

**Commission on Public Health - Establishment  
Support**

NCADD-Maryland supports Senate Bill 281. The experience we have had the last few years with both the opioid overdose crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic has shown the need for a robust public health response from the state.

There were 2,499 opioid-related deaths in 2020, an increase of 18.7 percent from 2019. In the first two quarters of 2021 (the most recent data available), there were 1,217 opioid-related fatal overdoses in this time frame, a slight increase over the number in the time period the year before. And the data is most concerning among communities of color. Between 2016 and 2020, there was a 120% increase in the number of fatal overdoses among non-Hispanic Black people 55 years old and over, compared to a 56% increase in non-Hispanic white Marylanders.

The public health response needed must focus on proven successful strategies that include harm reduction to not only save people's lives from an overdose, but prevent the spread of HIV and Hepatitis C. A Commission as envisioned in Senate Bill 281 could bring Maryland closer to reversing the trends of this long-standing crisis while also preparing us for the next one.

We urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 281.

*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.*