



**House Health and Government Operations Committee
March 7, 2023**

**House Bill 953
Public Health – Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program
Support**

One strategy the State has refused to approve is the creation of an Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services Program. NCADD-Maryland supports its creation through House Bill 953. This is a harm reduction strategy whereby people who consume drugs, can do so under clinical supervision. The primary purpose of this is to provide immediate assistance in the case of an overdose.

Along with direct assistance in saving people’s lives, these programs, as proposed in HB 953, would also avail people of:

- First aid and care for wounds;
- Sterile syringes and their collection;
- Referral to services for substance use disorders, HIV, hepatitis, sexually transmitted diseases, reproductive health care, and wound care; and
- Education regarding the risk of overdoses and the transmission of various infectious diseases.

There are two of these sites in New York City and their success in saving people’s lives is astounding. More than 100 such programs in jurisdictions around the world have decades worth of experience preventing overdoses and provided needed health care. Multiple studies show that these programs reduce the sharing of syringes, and therefore of the transmission of HIV and hepatitis. Research also shows a reduction in overdose deaths, discarded syringes, and an increase in the number of people who enter substance use disorder treatment.

Overdose prevention sites will reduce opioid overdose deaths and begin to address the public health consequences of the crisis. This bill will allow communities that want these services to be able to open them. We urge a favorable report on HB 953.

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.