



Senate Finance Committee
February 18, 2025

Senate Bill 594
Public Health - Use of Opioid Restitution Fund and Training Under the
Overdose Response Program
Support

NCADD-Maryland strongly supports Senate Bill 594 with one clarifying amendment. The intent of this bill is to ensure the expenditures Maryland can make with funds from the Opioid Restitution Fund (ORF) are in line with the allowable expenses specified in the National Settlement Agreement (NSA) and other settlements.

The General Assembly was prescient in establishing a special fund to receive and hold income to the State generated from the lawsuits against the manufactures, wholesalers, distributors and retailers for the actions that led directly to the opioid overdose crisis. Maryland created the ORF before the first, major national settlement was reached. As Maryland has begun the process of spending some of those settlement dollars, there is a realization that some of the language in the state statute is unintentionally limiting.

The intent of the section of the bill related to the allowable uses of the ORF is to have the state's uses match the uses described in the NSA and other settlement agreements. We believe this will add clarity, and actually expand the uses to some activities that were not included in our 2019 statute.

Importantly, **these changes do not eliminate any of the existing allowable expenditures.** Allowable expenses under current statute are included in the settlements. The changes proposed in the bill will explicitly allow items that are in alignment with settlements, including:

- Transportation
- Child care
- Housing
- Job training/placement
- Administrative costs that will better support community-based nonprofits

Due to an error in the bill as introduced, it does not fully remove the items from existing statute. We ask for an amendment to delete all the items under (1) on page 3 (lines 21 through page 4 line 11).

In general, this change would allow more projects and services related to social determinants of health to be funded. The allowable expenses in the settlements also consist only of evidence-based and evidence-informed practices. Having this alignment will make it more clear what state and local governments are allowed to fund. The bill also adds an emphasis on services that address racial disparities. While overdose deaths are down in Maryland, we continue to see a disproportionate number of people of color impacted.

Finally, the bill adds language to the training component of Overdose Response Programs regarding best practices in responding to overdoses, focusing on compassionate overdose response. While we support consumer choice with regard to all medications, NCADD-Maryland also believes that overdose reversal products that deliver high dosages and are long-acting are not needed as there is no evidence they are more effective than lower dosages. We also continue to have concerns about the potential harm caused by precipitating opioid withdrawal when higher dosages are used.¹

With one amendment, we ask this committee to give SB 594 a favorable report.

¹ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0955395924002718#sec0013>