



## Board of Directors 2019 - 2021

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## Senate Budget & Tax Committee January 27, 2021

### Senate Bill 172 Maryland Health Equity Resource Act Support

MATOD supports Senate Bill 172 – Maryland Health Equity Resource Act. This legislation would create and fund Health Equity Resource Communities to help reduce health disparities throughout Maryland. The Communities will provide grants, tax incentives, and health care provider loan repayment assistance to areas in the state with poor health outcomes that contribute to health inequities.

The area of substance use disorders has data showing health disparities along with all other areas of health. Trends in opioid overdose deaths show the number of people of color has been steadily increasing over the last couple of years during periods when the number of deaths among white people has decreased.

The bill would also provide additional funding for community-based prevention, treatment, and recovery support programs to address substance use and mental health disorders. The funding for these efforts would come from a 1% increase in the state alcohol beverage sales tax. Raising the alcohol tax has been proven to reduce underage drinking, binge drinking, driving under the influence, and sexually transmitted infections.

We believe a modest increase in this tax that has not been raised in 10 years could have overwhelming public health benefits. MATOD understands the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on most parts of our economy. The one industry that is thriving is retail alcohol stores. The benefits of passing SB 172 are nothing short of life-saving. We ask for a favorable report.

*MATOD members include community and hospital based Opioid Treatment Programs, local Health Departments, local Addiction and Behavioral Health Authorities and Maryland organizations that support evidence-based Medication Assisted Treatment. MATOD members include thousands of highly trained and dedicated addiction counselors, clinical social workers, physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nurses, peer recovery specialists and dedicated staff who work every day to save and transform lives.*