



**House Health & Government Operations Committee
March 30, 2021**

**Senate Bill 796
Maryland Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities and Maryland
Health Care Commission – Reporting Requirements
Support**

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the pre-existing opioid overdose death fatality crisis has worsened. In Maryland, third quarter data from the Maryland Department of Health shows a 14% increase in the number of opioid overdose deaths in 2020, over the same period the year before. There are also disturbing trends in the impact of the crisis on communities of color. This is just one aspect of the health disparities that exist that must be addressed.

Senate Bill 796 is an important component of a legislative package to advance health equity in Maryland. The bill enhances the State's ongoing planning efforts to address health equity by improving data collection about the healthcare workforce. The health occupation boards will be required to collect data on a voluntary basis about race and ethnicity from licensee and certificate holders. We support this legislation because it will enhance healthcare workforce planning to ensure the racial composition of the health care workforce reflects the communities that they serve. This is an important component of the success in addiction treatment services.

The State must develop specific strategies to address the worsening overdose death crisis among Black and Brown people. Collecting accurate and meaningful data related to the behavioral health workforce is an important step.

We urge a favorable report on SB 796.

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.

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