



House Health and Government Operations Committee

March 23, 2021

**Senate Bill 52
Maryland Commission on Health Equity –
The Shirley Nathan-Pulliam Health Equity Act of 2021**

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 12% increase in the number of 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.

Senate Bill 52 will establish a commission to ensure State agencies develop policies through a health equity lens. The Commission will use a health equity framework to, among other things, make recommendations regarding incorporating health considerations in decisions made across government agencies. NCADD-Maryland will work with the Commission to build support for the greater use of harm reduction strategies to better address the worsening overdose death crisis among Black and Brown people.

We urge a favorable report on SB 52.

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.