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Media Statement on Governor's Budget

(Annapolis, Md.) The Maryland Behavioral Health Coalition, a coalition of more than 40 non-governmental organizations, issued the following statements on Governor Larry Hogan's proposed fiscal year 2019 budget:

"When Governor Hogan signed the [HOPE Act](#) last year, we assumed he would honor the funding commitment in the legislation for community behavioral health providers," said Shannon Hall, executive director of Community Behavioral Health Association of Maryland. "Unfortunately, we found out today that he did not. While the Governor's budget does include a two percent rate increase, that is far short of the 3.5 percent specified in the Act."

"In the midst of a deadly opioid crisis and with rising demand for mental health and substance use disorder treatment, we are deeply disappointed that the budget shortchanges the urgent needs of Marylanders who desperately need treatment," said Howard Ashkin, president of the Maryland Association for the Treatment of Opioid Dependence. "We call upon Governor Hogan and legislative leaders to restore the funding to allow our community providers to keep their doors open to serve the most vulnerable Marylanders."

Last year, Governor Hogan signed the bipartisan HOPE Act, which passed the Senate unanimously and the House nearly unanimously. Included in the bill's provisions was a multiyear commitment to increase funding for community behavioral health providers, which have only had six modest increases in more than 20 years.

Restoring that funding is the top priority in the Behavioral Health Coalition's 2018 [legislative platform](#). The safety net of community mental health and substance use providers and clinics are staffed by public health professionals who work daily to make a difference saving lives and preventing costly hospital and emergency care.

The Coalition has planned a "Keep the Door Open" [rally](#) for February 22 at Lawyers Mall in Annapolis. Last year's rally drew approximately 500 attendees.

Advocates are tweeting about the campaign using [#KeepTheDoorOpenMd](#).

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The Behavioral Health Coalition of Maryland is a diverse mix of more than 50 non-governmental organizations working together to ensure individuals affected by mental health and substance use disorders have high quality and accessible services for their needs.

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