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Statement on Kirwan Commission's Recommendations for Student Behavioral Health

(Annapolis, Md.) Irnande Altema, director of public policy for special populations at the Mental Health Association of Maryland, issued the following statement on behalf of the Maryland Behavioral Health Coalition on the release of the Kirwan Commission's interim report, which includes several recommendations relating to student behavioral health:

"We thank the Kirwan Commission for its thorough work and are very pleased to see that student behavioral health was made a priority in its interim report. The Commission's recommendations for improving Maryland schools include increased training for school personnel to recognize student behavioral health issues and refer them to services; scaling of school behavioral health services in all schools; systematic screening and identification of student behavioral health needs; development of partnerships with community behavioral health providers; and others that will improve access to treatment and better equip schools to appropriately serve students with behavioral health needs.

"Implementing these recommendations to adequately address these students' needs is critical. National data indicates that one in five youth has a mental health disorder, which impairs their ability to function in a classroom or complete home assignments. When students have access to quality behavioral health services they need to succeed, both student health and educational outcomes improve.

"We look forward to working with the Kirwan Commission, the General Assembly and the Hogan Administration to ensure all of these behavioral health recommendations are adopted and fully funded."

The Commission's interim report can be found [here](#).

The Behavioral Health Coalition has planned a "Keep the Door Open" [March on Annapolis](#) for February 20 beginning at the Maryland Fire-Rescue Memorial in Annapolis. Similar rallies in previous years have drawn hundreds of attendees. The Coalition's full legislative platform can be found [here](#).

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 nonprofit organizations working together to ensure individuals affected by mental health and substance use disorders have high quality and accessible services for their needs. <http://www.KeepTheDoorOpenMD.org>