

# Maryland Behavioral Health Coalition 2018 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

The Maryland Behavioral Health Coalition respectfully requests that you respond to the questions below on issues related to mental health and substance use disorders. The Maryland Behavioral Health Coalition is a diverse mix of nonprofit organizations working to ensure that individuals with mental health and substance use disorders have access to quality care and services that meet their needs.

To educate voters impartially and on a nonpartisan basis, complete candidate responses will be published verbatim on the Maryland Behavioral Health Coalition website (<http://keepthedoropenmd.org/>) on October 16, 2018. To meet our publication deadline, your responses must be received no later than October 12, 2018. If you do not respond, the publication will state Did Not Respond.

Questions and responses will be used in compliance with all IRS rules for 501(c)(3) organizations.

Please respond to each question in 200 words or less, and submit completed questionnaires to Dan Martin via email at [dmartin@mhamd.org](mailto:dmartin@mhamd.org).

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire, and for taking the opportunity to communicate your views on behavioral health issues and policy.

**Candidate Name**        **Diedra Henry-Spires**  
**Office Sought**        **Delegate**  
**District**                **26**  
**Campaign Contact**    **MJ Spires**  
**Campaign Contact Phone**    **240-210-5748**  
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1. What would you propose to reduce stigma associated with mental health and substance use disorders?

**I would propose legislation that emphasized curriculum development consistent with comprehensively educating regarding mental health and substance abuse and the importance of understanding their respective implications and the need for sensitivity. As well, I would call for increased and enhanced diversity training in these areas for professionals and para-professionals.**

2. What strategies would you employ to reduce overdose deaths and suicides?

**Recognizing that overdose and suicide are often related to underlying issues of mental health and associated with generational influence, I would urge the implementation of 2-generational strategies**

**including home visiting and mental health counseling to assist in early detection and prevention of associated triggers and behaviors leading to crisis that result in overdose and/or suicide.**

3. What specific initiatives would you propose to better address the prevention, early intervention and treatment needs of children and youth living with mental illness and/or substance use disorders?

**See my answer for #2.**

4. Maryland's older adults are the fastest growing demographic with unmet mental health and substance use disorder needs. How would you address the behavioral health needs of this population?

**I would urge the recognition of this situation as a public health crisis. In so doing, I would seek to establish a campaign to address said public health crisis.**

5. What would you do to increase the availability of mental health and addiction providers in the state?

**I would propose legislation that allocated more resources to raise public awareness of the mental health and addiction crises, fund more providers, streamline processes to acquire mental and addiction health services, and incentivize insurance plans to fully comply with all health parity laws.**

6. How would you ensure health insurance plans are in compliance with existing behavioral health parity laws and educate consumers about their rights to equitable mental health and addiction coverage?

**See #5**

7. What would you do to ensure that low income individuals with mental health and substance use disorders have access to safe, stable and affordable housing?

**I would propose the establishment of pilot programs to explore the feasibility of several approaches to address consistent and affordable housing for the affected populations.**

8. What strategies would you employ to address the overrepresentation of individuals with behavioral health needs in Maryland jails and prisons?

**Because the overlap of untreated mental health issues and incarceration has become so prevalent, I believe it is necessary for a joint task force and/or commission consisting of the judicial, law enforcement, and mental health communities be established to find the correct balance in processing individuals with behavioral health needs.**

9. Given the continuing rise in demand for mental health and substance use disorder services, what steps would you take to move Maryland toward a system with true on-demand access and comprehensive behavioral health crisis response services?

**See #5.**