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Media Statement on Governor's Budget

(Annapolis, Md.) Dan Martin, director of public policy for the Mental Health Association of Maryland, speaking for the Maryland Behavioral Health Coalition, issued the following statement on Governor Larry Hogan's proposed fiscal year 2018 budget:

"Once again, the Behavioral Health Coalition is pleased that a desperately needed 2 percent rate increase for both Medicaid and uninsured services is included in Governor Hogan's proposed budget. However, with rising demand for mental health and substance use disorder treatment and increasing medical costs, behavioral health providers are still losing ground. We must secure more stable, long-term funding to support these community providers and allow them to keep their doors open to the most vulnerable Marylanders."

Data from the Maryland Hospital Association shows the dramatic increase in behavioral health [hospital admissions](#) and [emergency department](#) visits in recent years. The higher admissions lead to increased public spending at a time when analysts project a state budget shortfall.

The "Keep the Door Open Act" is the top priority in the coalition's 2017 [legislative platform](#). The legislation indexes the behavioral health provider rates, which have only had seven modest increases in more than 20 years, to the cost of medical inflation. Advocates say that the Keep the Door Open Act will help community health clinics and other behavioral health providers treat patients before more costly hospital or emergency care is needed.

The coalition is also supporting two additional priorities: ensuring that Marylanders with health insurance can access crisis services and creating long-term funding for treatment resources to combat Maryland's opioid epidemic.

The Coalition has planned a "Keep the Door Open" [rally](#) for February 23 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 40 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. www.keepthedoopenmd.org