



The Behavioral Health Workforce and Minimum Wage in Maryland

The Community Behavioral Health Association of Maryland (CBH) is the professional organization for community-based programs offering mental health and addiction treatment, residential services, and psychiatric rehabilitation. Our 57 members serve three-quarters of the 260,000 individuals using Maryland's public behavioral health system, offering a continuum of specialty supports to individuals with behavioral health needs. The frontline staff employed by our members are the backbone of the public behavioral health system, caring for vulnerable individuals with addiction, serious mental illness and, very often, co-morbid medical conditions. All too often, our frontline staff could earn more money and face less stress if they took jobs in the fast food industry. Their commitment and the difficulty of their work deserve a higher wage. For this reason, CBH supports legislation that would increase the minimum wage.

The Impact on Behavioral Health Providers

Reimbursement for community behavioral health providers is set by the state and is not adjusted to take account of rising costs. Providers cannot pass increased costs on to indigent consumers. Stagnating reimbursement is already straining the community behavioral health system. Member data collected last year shows:

- 49% of our members operate at a deficit, up from 36% two years ago.
- Staff turnover among our members has increased by 37% in the last two years.
- Average days of cash on hand for our members fell from 56 to 36 days over the last year, a decline of over one-third.

Roughly 26% of our members' workforce currently earns less than \$15/hour. Increasing their wages would require providers to re-set their salary scales, so that supervisors earn more than employees, and would increase any percentage-based employer contributions to retirement plans.



The combined impact of these adjustments would increase our members' costs on average by 19%.



Any increase in the minimum wage must include language to increase behavioral health reimbursement rates.

Maryland jobs and Maryland healthcare depend on it.