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## Maryland Behavioral Health Coalition FY 2021 BUDGET TALKING POINTS

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- In the midst of a continuing overdose and suicide crisis, and with rising demand for mental health and substance use disorder treatment, we are very concerned that the proposed Fiscal Year 2021 budget shortchanges Marylanders who need behavioral health treatment by nearly \$25 million.
- Maryland's overdose epidemic shows signs of slow improvement. But we are still very much in the midst of a crisis, and we can't afford to move backward.
- This reduction in funding does not comply with established legislation. The proposed Fiscal Year 2021 budget does not fund community mental health and substance use treatment to the extent required by either the 2019 minimum wage bill or the bipartisan HOPE Act of 2017—both of which included mandatory increases in community behavioral health spending to correct 20 years of chronic underfunding.
- We have seen the devastating effects of those years of neglect in the ongoing overdose crisis and rising suicide rates. And while we're making some headway, we're by no means out of the woods.
- Behavioral health providers face rising rent, health premiums, equipment costs and staff salaries. They also face unfunded mandates to purchase expensive electronic health records but, unlike most other sectors of healthcare, have been excluded from federal incentive funds.
- As the legislature works to fund strategies recommended in the Kirwan report, we must remember that education only works if children are healthy enough to learn. Our youth with mental health and substance use disorders cannot succeed academically unless we are addressing their behavioral health needs.