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House Appropriations Committee - February 27, 2020

House Bill 152

BCSAD opposition to BRFA Cut of Medicaid Provider Rates

The Baltimore City Substance Abuse Director (BSCAD) is an advocacy and provider organization comprised of 30 Baltimore City substance use disorders treatment providers representing all levels of care from prevention to residential treatment. Our mission is the promotion of high-quality, best-practice and effective substance use disorders treatment for the citizens of Baltimore City. We are also involved in and support legislation that ensures our citizens get the best possible care through active consideration of legislation as it relates to the health and well-being of our consumer population.

BCSAD strongly opposes the BRFA recommended 2% Medicaid provider rate decrease, and the budget analysis recommended 6 month delay of the mandated 4% provider rate increase. Both options underfund necessary substance use and mental health treatment by nearly \$25 million. BCSAD supports the FY 21 budgeted 4% rate increase mandated by the minimum wage bill of 2019, and the HOPE Act of 2017.

The need and importance of the 4% Behavioral Health provider increase can't be stressed enough. The difference that the full 4% increase will make can be measured in lives saved from the availability and delivery of behavioral health services. The full 4% provider rate increase will help substance use and mental health providers **Keep Their Doors Open**.

Funding the budgeted 4% increase is necessary for providers to retain high quality, experienced staff, as well as recruit and train new staff, in response to our communities' continuing increased needs. The expected 4% increase will support the delivery of life-saving substance use and mental health treatment services, behavioral health crisis services, stabilization and referral services and overdose prevention and reversal services. Now is **not** the time to reduce the funding that providers desperately need to serve their communities.

While behavioral health providers are grateful for the small rate increases over the past few years, cost increases associated with providing high quality, evidence-based, licensed, accredited behavioral health services exceed these rate increases every year.

Marylanders suffering with addiction and mental health disorders deserve the best outcomes that treatment can offer – they and the provider community need and deserve the full 4% provider increase to be funded. This one decision will save countless Maryland lives.

BCSAD requests the full funding of the budgeted 4% provider increase in the FY 21 budget, and **opposes the BRFA cut to 2% in HB 152.**

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