



Maryland

DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET
AND MANAGEMENT

LARRY HOGAN
Governor

BOYD K. RUTHERFORD
Lieutenant Governor

DAVID R. BRINKLEY
Secretary

MARC L. NICOLE
Deputy Secretary

HOUSE BILL 517 Consumer Health Access Program for Mental Health and Addiction Care – Establishment (R. Lewis)

STATEMENT OF INFORMATION

DATE: February 23, 2022

COMMITTEE: House Health & Government Operations

SUMMARY OF BILL: HB 517 creates a Consumer Health Access Program for Mental Health and Addiction Care, the purpose of which is to assist State residents in accessing mental health and substance use disorder services under public and private health insurance. The Program is run by the University of Maryland-Baltimore School of Social Work, Center for Addiction Research, Education and Services (Center) and a private, nonprofit selected by the Center to operate the program. The Center and the private, nonprofit administer a new Fund, which is funded by a \$1 million mandated appropriation in FY 2024, FY 2025, and FY 2025.

EXPLANATION: The Department of Budget and Management's focus is not on the underlying policy proposal being advanced by the legislation, but rather on the aggregate \$3 million mandated appropriation provision that impacts the FY 2024, FY 2025, and FY 2026 Budgets. Further, it is atypical to allow a non-State entity to administer a State fund.

DBM has the responsibility of submitting a balanced budget to the General Assembly annually, which will require spending allocations for FY 2024 to be within the official revenues estimates approved by the Board of Revenue Estimates in December 2022.

Changes to the Maryland Constitution in 2020 provide the General Assembly with additional budgetary authority, beginning in the 2023 Session, to realign total spending by increasing and adding items to appropriations in the budget submitted by the Governor. The legislature's new budgetary power diminishes, if not negates, the need for mandated appropriation bills.

Fully funding the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Kirwan) will require fiscal discipline in the years ahead, if the State is to maintain the current projected structural budget surpluses. Mandated spending increases need to be reevaluated within the context of this education funding priority and the Governor's tax relief proposals.

Economic conditions remain precarious as a result of COVID-19. High rates of inflation and workforce shortages may be short lived or persist, thereby impacting the Maryland economy. While current budget forecasts project structural surpluses, the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic continues to present a significant budgetary

vulnerability. The Department continues to urge the General Assembly to focus on maintaining the structural budget surplus.

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