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Josh Grollmes, MS
Serenity Health
JGrollmes@serenityllc.net

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Sinai Hospital Addictions
Recovery Program (SHARP)
MAVail@lifebridgehealth.org

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Northern Parkway Treatment
Services, BH Health Services
BabakImanoel@gmail.com

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Johns Hopkins Hospital
The Broadway Center
KStolle@jhmi.edu

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IBR/REACH Health Services
VWalters@ibrinc.org



c/o IBR/REACH Health Services
2104 Maryland Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21218



(410) 752-6080



www.matod.org

House Economic Matters Committee February 22, 2022

House Bill 698 Labor and Employment - State Minimum Wage Rate - Increase Support with Amendments

The Maryland Association for the Treatment of Opioid Dependence (MATOD) urges a favorable opinion on HB 698 with the amendment described below. MATOD represents over 65 healthcare organizations across Maryland that provide and promote high-quality, effective medication assisted treatment for opioid addiction. MATOD programs serve over 35,000 Marylanders enrolled in opioid treatment programs (OTPs) receiving methadone and buprenorphine, in conjunction with counseling and other medical services.

MATOD supports efforts to raise the state's minimum wage. Research over many years has shown that raising the minimum wage leads to other improvements in people's lives, including:

- Improved adult mental health outcomes and overall health and wellbeing
- Improved infant health outcomes
- Decreased poverty
- Decreased rates of child abuse and neglect
- Improved educational outcomes
- Improved graduation rates

Importantly, increasing the minimum wage also helps close the wage gap among people of color and women who are low-wage workers.

In 2019 when the Maryland General Assembly passed the Fight for Fifteen law, you saw the wisdom to include Medicaid reimbursement rate increases for community-based services along with the incremental increases to the minimum wage. In a proposal to speed up the planned increases to the minimum wage, the planned increases in the Medicaid reimbursement rates must also be sped up. Programs that provide substance use disorder treatment are struggling to retain a well-trained workforce and our ability to use rate increases to invest in our workforce is essential.

We urge your support of House Bill 698 with amendments to that make this policy consistent with the policy you enacted in 2019.

MATOD members include community and hospital based Opioid Treatment Programs, local Health Departments, local Addiction and Behavioral Health Authorities and Maryland organizations that support evidence-based Medication Assisted Treatment. MATOD members include thousands of highly trained and dedicated addiction counselors, clinical social workers, physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nurses, peer recovery specialists and dedicated staff who work every day to save and transform lives.