

March 4, 2026

Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and distinguished members of the Budget and Taxation Committee,

NAMI Maryland and our 11 local affiliates across the state represent a network of more than 60,000 families, individuals, community-based organizations, and service providers. NAMI Maryland is a 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to providing education, support, and advocacy for people living with mental illnesses, their families, and the wider community.

NAMI Maryland recognizes that the budget is the premier policy document of the State of Maryland. Budgets numerically and coldly prescribe which initiatives our government prioritizes, which issues it is deprioritizing, and which ones are left out entirely. NAMI Maryland recognizes that the General Assembly is facing a second consecutive legislative session where it must balance a budget that, as it currently stands, lacks projected revenue to cover projected expenses. As you make the most difficult choices of this session, we ask that you continue to prioritize services and supports for Marylanders living with mental health conditions.

Three items within the budget that directly provide or connect people with mental health services are at risk of being casualties of the current fiscal climate. Those are school mental health funding through the Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports, continued expansion of Maryland's network of Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs), and reimbursement rates for community mental health and substance use providers.

Youth Mental Health Services in Maryland's Schools

This committee worked hard to maintain a sufficient level of funding for school mental health services through the Consortium last year; NAMI Maryland appreciates and will not forget that you listened to the mental health advocacy community last year and made tough decisions to keep it funded at \$100 million annually going forward. The proposed budget before you now would reduce that to \$80 million for FY27. We respectfully ask this committee again to listen to NAMI and other advocacy organizations who are hear to speak for youth, parents, and teachers who have seen these funds support over 136,000 students last year alone. Up to 80% of those students saw improved mental health outcomes. We ask you to restore that \$20 million to the Consortium budget.

Stephanie Slowly-Little
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CCBHCs

CCBHCs are care integration models that have shown impressive outcomes around Maryland. CCBHCs mitigate workforce challenges, reduce hospital costs, reduce criminal justice involvement, and improve overall health outcomes. The proposed budget would make continued expansion of CCBHCs discretionary and would not provide bridge funding to maintain the current number of patients seen and services currently provided. We ask you to restore the planned expansion of CCBHCs across the states.

3% Funding Increase for Community Behavioral Health Care

FY27 would be, under the proposed budget, the third consecutive year of frozen reimbursement rates for mental health and substance use providers. In the face of inflation, provider shortages among both Medicaid providers and the higher-paying private sector, and increasingly frustrating barriers to care coming down from the federal level, freezing these rates has the same practical effect as lowering them. Maintaining rates at the current levels will lead to providers no longer accepting Medicaid or leaving the state entirely in search of better wages. The result will be devastating to Marylanders in need of mental health and substance use services. We respectfully ask you to include a 3% rate increase in the FY27 budget.

Thank you for considering our testimony and for your continued work on behalf of the over 781,000 Marylanders living with mental health conditions, their families, and their communities.