



HOUSE BILL 161 Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2018

<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frmMain.aspx?id=HB0161&stab=01&pid=billpage&tab=subject3&ys=2018RS>

Appropriations Committee

March 2, 2018

SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT – TO RESTORE INCREASE IN FUNDING TO 3.5%

Submitted by the Maryland-DC Society of Addiction Medicine, a professional society of physicians and associated health professionals in the field of addiction medicine; a chapter of the American Society of Addiction Medicine.

With all of the attention on addressing our opioid addiction crisis, the most important piece of the puzzle is being overlooked.

Namely, the front-line workforce who provide the treatment.

The increase in provider reimbursement must be restored to 3.5% as enacted in last year's HOPE Act.

The legislature is weighing many behavioral health priorities and new ideas, many of them critically important.

But no intervention is fully effective with an underpaid front-line workforce.

Employees at programs for mental health and substance use treatment in Maryland tend to be poorly compensated, overworked, and subject to a high rate of turnover. Staff turnover is highly detrimental to clients who have built relationships over months and years with their counselor or therapist.

Adequate reimbursement would support staff retention, quality and workforce development.

New ideas in this field are welcome, but let us not forget that all treatments are significantly affected when the front-line staff is subject to turnover and dissatisfaction due to inadequate reimbursement.

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