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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Dan Martin, Mental Health Association of Maryland, 410-978-8865

Media Statement on Governor's Budget

(Annapolis, Md.) Dan Martin, senior director of public policy for the Mental Health Association of Maryland, issue the following statement on behalf of the Maryland Behavioral Health Coalition on Governor Larry Hogan's proposed fiscal year 2020 budget:

"We are very pleased that Governor Hogan is supporting Marylanders with behavioral health needs by fully funding prior budget commitments for mental health and substance use disorder services," said Dan Martin, senior director of public policy for the Mental Health Association of Maryland. "Over the past two years, the General Assembly approved legislation to provide a long overdue 3.5 percent increase in funding for community behavioral health services, \$3 million in crisis response funding for local jurisdictions and other initiatives to improve the delivery of behavioral health care in primary care settings. Ensuring these commitments were honored was one of our top legislative priorities this year, and we are thrilled to start this session off with a big win for Marylanders.

"We look forward to the continued support of the General Assembly to ensure this funding remains in the final budget as we move through this legislative session. However, this is not the finish line. With opioid overdose deaths continuing to rise and demand for behavioral health services skyrocketing, we must continue to find common sense solutions to expand access to treatment and community-based services for all Marylanders in need. We look forward to continuing to work with the General Assembly and the Governor on these initiatives."

The Behavioral Health Coalition's 2019 [legislative platform](#) includes a number of priorities: expanding behavioral health services in schools to improve student health and educational outcomes; improving access to medication-assisted treatment (MAT) and other substance use treatment options; and diverting behavioral health patients from costly emergency rooms and general hospitals to community-based services.

The Coalition has planned a "Keep the Door Open" [March on Annapolis](#) for February 20 beginning at the Maryland Fire-Rescue Memorial in Annapolis. Similar rallies in previous years have drawn hundreds of attendees.

Advocates are tweeting about the campaign using [#KeepTheDoorOpenMd](#).

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The Behavioral Health Coalition of Maryland is a diverse mix of more than 50 nonprofit organizations working together to ensure individuals affected by mental health and substance use disorders have high quality and accessible services for their needs. <http://www.KeepTheDoorOpenMD.org>