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## **IN FACE OF BUDGET SHORTFALL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CRISIS, MARYLAND TURNS AWAY \$1 MILLION IN FEDERAL FUNDS ALREADY AWARDED**

[BALTIMORE (February 14, 2025)] – Maryland has the half the workforce it needs to address the mental health and addiction needs of Maryland residents. Inadequate capacity leads to children remaining in hospitals inappropriately, lack of community placements for forensic patients, and growing pressure on Maryland's emergency departments. The Maryland Health Care Commission and a General Assembly task force have urgently called for funding and planning to address these problems.

In January, the federal government offered Maryland almost \$1 million to develop a long-term plan to improve access and capacity of the state's behavioral health services by sustaining the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) model. Remarkably, Health Secretary Laura Herrera-Scott indicated that she plans to turn the funds down.

The Community Behavioral Health Association of Maryland (CBH) calls on Governor Moore and the incoming Health Secretary Dr. Meena Seshamani to accept the already-awarded CCBHC planning grant and pursue steps to address Maryland's pressing behavioral health needs in future fiscal years.

Six providers across the state have used federal grants to creatively expand behavioral health services to reduce hospital costs and criminal justice involvement while improving health outcomes. These organizations are relying on the Maryland Department of Health to develop a plan to sustain and expand these services in the future.

"We used our capacity-building grant to increase access to care. We purchased medical translation software to help us communicate with *all* people experiencing behavioral health crises in our community. The grant has also allowed us to add nursing staff to support clients who are aging in place," said Cari Guthrie, CEO of Cornerstone Montgomery in Rockville. "By delivering the care our patients need, we have been able to reduce hospitalizations and ED usage by more than 30%."

"The CCBHC capacity-building grant has enabled us to divert individuals with substance use needs from deeper involvement in the criminal justice system by immediately connecting them to essential treatment and wraparound services," said Kristy Blalock, Vice President of Growth and Strategy at Gaudenzia, a CCBHC grantee in Baltimore City. "By addressing their needs holistically, we support their recovery, reduce justice system involvement, and improve overall well-being."

Shannon Hall, Executive Director of CBH, pointed to CCBHC results in New York, which saw a 61 percent decrease in the number of clients using general hospital inpatient services and a 54 percent decrease in all-cause readmissions. "To turn away already-awarded federal dollars and refuse to develop a comprehensive plan to tackle Maryland's behavioral health needs is a mistake that needs to be corrected. We look forward to engaging with Governor Moore's new health secretary to ensure that the needs of Maryland's vulnerable children and adults can be adequately addressed in the future."

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