

Alcohol Tax Press Conference

Tuesday, January 24, 2012

The mental health community stands alongside our partners in the Alcohol Tax Coalition, grateful for the services the Governor has proposed for people with mental illness and other disabilities using alcohol tax funds.

Creation of a behavioral health home, improving services for incarcerated individuals with mental illness, affordable housing and many of the other initiatives in the alcohol tax plan will make a fundamental difference in the lives of our most vulnerable citizens, young and old, who are living with mental illness.

These are also fiscally prudent measures that steer the public mental health system toward a course that will increase efficiency, and make the best possible use of government funds to address pressing health and human service needs of people in communities across our state who must rely on government for care.

Like all areas of state government, mental health funding is not without its challenges in the coming year. Governor O'Malley has found a way to address the needs of people with disabilities throughout his tenure, and we look forward to working with him on budget concerns as the legislative process moves forward.

So what does it mean for Maryland families?

Answer to that question lies in one of the most recent calls to our office for help:

- Middle class, working family with private insurance
- Reeling from the recent diagnosis of serious mental illness in one of their young children
- Severe disturbance at home and school
- Multiple hospitalizations without any results for their child
- Unable to get their insurance to cover anything else
- Lacking the thousands of dollars it would take to buy the care their child needs
- Kind of story that sends a shudder up the spine of any parent who thinks about how they would feel or what they would do if this was one of their own

The health home initiative in the Governor's Alcohol Tax plan is the kind of progressive reform that holds the promise of helping families like this one. We thank the Governor for moving the health care system in this direction.

Thank you.

