



Danna E. Mauch, PhD
President and CEO

Ambassador (ret.) Barry B. White
Chairperson of MAMH Board of Directors

August 4, 2023

The Honorable Maura Healey
Governor, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
24 Beacon Street, Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Healey:

Re: Behavioral Health Provisions in FY24 Conference Committee Budget

On behalf of the Massachusetts Association for Mental Health, I write regarding critical behavioral health provisions contained in the FY24 Conference Committee Budget. Since the pandemic, there has been increased demand for behavioral health services and a corresponding strain on service providers. We have been fortunate as a Commonwealth to have pursued transformative services over the last several years, particularly through implementation of the EOHHS Roadmap for Behavioral Health Reform, the 1115 MassHealth Waiver, and the many provisions of Chapter 177 of the Acts of 2022 currently being implemented at the state agency level. We greatly appreciate your Administration's recognition of these ongoing commitments to addressing the mental health needs of Massachusetts residents.

With respect to the FY24 Conference Committee budget, we write in strong support of a number of important initiatives and programs that will contribute to the advancement of behavioral health in the Commonwealth. We take this opportunity to note key items. We are also an Executive Member of the Children's Mental Health Campaign (CMHC) and a Member of the Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance (MHSA). Each of these organizations will be sending a budget letter and we also support their priorities.

Children/Adolescents

- DMH 5042-5000 - \$1.275M for the Massachusetts Association for Mental Health (MAMH) and the BIRCh Center to continue collaborating on the School Mental Health Technical Assistance Center to aid school administrators, teachers, and staff, including \$75,000 for MAMH to conduct an environmental scan of K-12 mental health education initiatives and to align the identified curricular resources with the Massachusetts Comprehensive Health Curriculum Framework.
- DESE 7061-0028 - \$6M for Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) for K-12 schools to ensure that school districts have a framework to build the necessary systems to ensure that each and every student receives a high-quality educational experience.
- DESE 7066-1123 - \$4.228M for mental health grants to community colleges and state universities to provide student behavioral health services including crisis services, therapy, the assessment of learning disorders, responses to sexual assault, substance use disorder services and assistance to students struggling with stress, anxiety, or other mental health needs.

- OCA 0930-0101 - \$3.75M for a state Center on Child Wellness and Trauma to support child-serving organizations and systems in becoming trauma-informed and responsive through training, technical assistance, communities of practice, and other support.

EOHHS Roadmap

- DMH 5046-0000 - \$19M for the DMH Adult Emergency Department Diversion Initiative to create or expand respite programs that will support individuals in transitioning out of emergency departments and back into the community, as well as divert individuals from emergency departments and unnecessary hospitalization in the first place.
- DOI 7006-0029 - \$250K for DOI to implement and enforce mental health parity protections established in Chapter 177 of the Acts of 2022 including, but not limited to, hiring staff, screening, investigating and adjudicating consumer and provider parity complaints and conducting market conduct exams.

Jail Diversion

- EOHHS 4000-0300 - \$1.25M for the Middlesex County Restoration Center for continuation of a pilot program to establish the Center that will expand community capacity for mental health and substance use treatment and support ongoing law enforcement diversionary efforts across New England’s most populous county.
- DMH 5046-0000 - \$11M for the Massachusetts Jail/Arrest Diversion Initiative, to provide grants to local communities and behavioral health providers to improve outcomes for individuals when they encounter police and other first responders during a behavioral health crisis.
- DPH 4512-2020 - \$3.5M for Equitable Approaches to Public Safety (EAPS), a grant program to municipalities to respond to crisis situations using alternative emergency response.

Housing

- DHCD 7004-9033 - \$16.548M for the DMH Rental Subsidy Program to address the increased need for rental assistance among individuals with severe and disabling mental health conditions, as evident by the significant number of people “stuck” in hospitals, emergency departments, and nursing homes.
- DMH 5046-2000 - \$4M earmark to expand safe haven housing, which provide transitional and supportive housing for chronically homeless individuals with multiple disabilities who are not well served by the traditional shelter system, usually due to histories of trauma, in a manner that ensures geographically equitable access.

Workforce Development

- EOHHS 4000-0054 - \$192M to appropriate federal COVID Relief/American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars in the Behavioral Health Trust Fund to enhance and expand access to mental and behavioral health supports and services, including investments in loan repayment assistance and scholarship programs for health professionals.
- DPH 4513-2020 - \$5.5M for loan forgiveness through the Behavioral Health Outreach, Access and Support Trust (BHOAST) Fund, including \$3M for child psychiatrists at health centers and community mental health centers.
- DPH 4513-2020 - \$2.5M to address emergency department boarding through staffing investments and rate incentives associated with fully operationalizing inpatient mental health acute care beds and intensive inpatient psychiatric beds, intensive community based acute treatment, community based acute treatment and partial hospitalization capacity to operationalize existing capacity and promote culturally and linguistically competent workforce development.

Other Initiatives

- DPH 4513-2020 - \$12.835M for the BHOAST Fund to provide, in addition to the workforce development programs described above:
 - \$3.532M for a pilot program to increase student access to behavioral telehealth services in schools;
 - \$500K for mental health workforce pipeline program to encourage a culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse behavioral health workforce through collaboration between colleges and behavioral health providers;
 - \$1M for public awareness campaign to raise awareness about behavioral health services.
- ORI 4003-0122 - \$300K for the Refugee Health Promotion program within the Office for Refugees and Immigrants to expand behavioral health and wellness programming.

The FY24 budget represents a thoughtful and expansive set of services to benefit people with behavioral health needs. We are grateful for the Administration's efforts to advance these priorities. Please let us know if we can serve as a resource for questions or concerns. Thank you for your consideration and leadership in advancing the behavioral health reform agenda.

Sincerely,



Danna Mauch, PhD
President and CEO, MAMH

c. Matthew Gorzkowicz, Secretary, Executive Office for Administration and Finance
Kate Walsh, Secretary, Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS)
Chris Harding, Chief of Staff and Undersecretary, EOHHS
Mary McGeown, Undersecretary for Human Services, EOHHS
Dr. Kiame Mahaniah, Undersecretary for Health, EOHHS
Robert McLaughlin, Legislative Director, EOHHS
Kate Cook, Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor
Alicia Rebello-Pradas, Deputy Chief of Staff for Legislative Affairs, Office of the Governor