

## Priorities for the 2018 State Legislative Session

The 2018 legislative session is the time to advance a policy and advocacy approach that is targeted and strategic, and that positions Health Care for the Homeless to advance and realize its [2018-2021 strategic goals](#).



### Approach

We are strategically positioning ourselves to advocate in areas that are highly relevant to our new strategic plan goals. To that end, our approach to the 2018 legislative session:

- aligns to our mission, spanning issues of housing, health and incomes
- supports our strategic goals and direction
- targets issues that have the broadest impact on our community
- leverages the unique perspective and value-added the agency has to offer
- builds on the agency's legislative momentum during the 2017 session

### Proposed Bills

The below are likely new bills and 2017 bills we expect to be reintroduced in 2018 that we identified as advocacy priorities going into the legislative 2018 session. We will expand and modify this list as the session advances and the issues come into clearer focus.

\*\*\*

### Housing

- **HOME Act (2017: SB 728/HB 172)**
  - **Purpose**  
To prevent discrimination against prospective tenants based on legal source of income
  - **Strategic goal alignment**  
Supports all three strategic goals
  - **Background**  
HOME Act legislation has been introduced in 7 of the last 8 sessions, 2010-2017 minus 2015. The bill passed the House in 2017 but never made it out of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee. A bill is expected to be introduced again in 2018. Health Care for the Homeless has consistently advocated for the HOME Act over the years. It was one of its three Lobby Day priority bills in 2017. There is reason to believe it could get traction in 2018—and pass, closing the loop on a long, hard-fought fight.
- **Rental Assistance Program (2017: SB 813/HB 689)**
  - **Purpose**  
To extend from 12 months to a minimum of four years the minimum period for individuals and families to receive rental assistance to facilitate the move from homelessness or temporary emergency housing to permanent housing and self-sufficiency.
  - **Strategic goal alignment**  
Supports all three strategic goals

**Everyone deserves to go home.**

- **Background**  
A recommendation of the 2016 Joint Committee on Ending Homelessness (JCEH), the Rental Assistance Program extension bill unanimously passed the Senate in 2017, with an amendment to reduce the minimum timeframe for the subsidy from four to two years, but did not get traction in the House. The bill's sponsor in the House in 2017 was Del. Geraldine Valentino-Smith and in the Senate it was Sen. Rich Madaleno, a 2018 candidate for governor. (Both Valentino-Smith and Madaleno serve on the JCEH.) It is not clear that a bill will be reintroduced in 2018, and it does have limitations in its reach and its impact for our community: It currently serves some 600 households statewide and it is a benefit that we very rarely, if at all, leverage on behalf of our clients. Meanwhile, we did testify in support of the bill last year and an extension of the subsidy timeframe could be an important step in the larger, longer-term push to increase access to affordable housing.

## Health

- **Community Health Worker Act (2017: SB 988/HB 1113)**
  - **Purpose**  
To establish the State Board of Community Health Workers (CHW) within the Maryland Department of Health and certify individuals to practice as community health workers
  - **Strategic goal alignment**  
Supports strategic goals 1 + 3
  - **Background**  
First introduced in 2017, this bill grew out of a recommendation from the 2015 Workgroup on Workforce Development for Community Health Workers, established as a result of legislation. The bill passed the House (lead sponsor was Del. Clarence Lam) and made it to a floor vote in the Senate (lead sponsor was Sen. Shirley Nathan-Pulliam) but was sent back to committee for modification. The bill is expected to be re-introduced in 2018. The CHW role at Health Care for the Homeless has become increasingly important within the context of care teams and care coordination; in recent months we have expanded CHW staffing. Formalizing the role at the state level would facilitate development of research-backed and replicable best practices in the field.
- **Adult Dental Medicaid Benefit (2017: SB 169/HB 1158)**
  - **Purpose**  
To establish an adult dental Medicaid benefit
  - **Strategic goal alignment**  
Supports strategic goals 1 + 3
  - **Background**  
The 2017 bill requested that the Maryland Dental Action Coalition (MDAC) study the Medicaid cost of emergency room visits by adult Marylanders with chronic dental health conditions and determine the advisability of expanding Medicaid benefits to include dental services for adult Medicaid enrollees. The bill passed (Sen. Thomas Middleton and Del. Mike McKay were lead sponsors), and MDAC completed the study. We are waiting to see whether the benefit will move forward this session as part of the budget or legislative process. A dental benefit would dramatically increase access to care for our clients.

## Income

- **Increased Minimum Wage (2017: HB 1416/SB 962)**
  - **Purpose**

- To increase the state minimum wage from \$10.10/hour in 2018 to \$15/hour by 2024
- **Strategic goal alignment**  
Supports strategic goals 2 + 3
- **Background**  
The bill had committee hearings in both chambers in 2017, but in neither case made it out of committee. It was sponsored by Del. Jeff Waldstreicher and Sen. Richard Madaleno. The bill will be re-introduced in 2018 by Sen. Madaleno and Del. Shelly Hettleman, and would raise the state's lowest allowable wage from \$10.10 an hour to \$15 by 2023.
- **Temporary Disability Assistance Program (TDAP)**
  - **Purpose**  
To increase the benefit amount from \$185 to a floor of \$205, which would restore the benefit to its 1992 level—the highest it has ever been. Incidentally, the \$20 increase would cover the cost of a monthly \$20 disability bus pass.
  - **Strategic goal alignment**  
Supports strategic goals 2 + 3
  - **Background**  
Last year, the Welfare Advocates coalition, led by Catholic Charities, succeeded in getting a \$10-a-month increase (from \$185 to \$195) written into the budget, but the governor never acted on it. TDAP is the only benefit in Maryland that is 100% General Fund funded—it receives no federal matching dollars. We as an agency have long advocated for a TDAP increase and other, related benefit increases over the years. Increasing the benefit amount by \$20 would have an important impact on our community.