

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 2018 bills that we identified as advocacy priorities for the legislative 2018 session. Note: We are keeping our ear to the ground re: bill status and activity and will update this document regularly, as our priority bills come into better focus.

Health

- **Community Health Workers—Advisory Committee and Certification (SB 163; HB 490)**
 - **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 for revisions to the certification requirements. The bill has been re-introduced in 2018 by both Sen. Nathan-Pulliam and Del. Lam in both chambers. There is broad agreement among stakeholders that there should be certification and an approved curriculum. Where there is disagreement is around whether or not CHWs in Maryland must be certified. Hospitals don't want the certification requirement, but agree there should be standard training. That training is happening now through the Baltimore Area Health Education Center, as of fall 2017. There is a good bit of discussion and debate re: the certification issue.
- **Dental Coverage for Adults (SB 284)**
 - **Purpose**
To establish an adult dental Medicaid benefit

Everyone deserves to go home.

“Requiring the Maryland Medical Assistance Program, under certain circumstances, to provide limited dental coverage for certain adults beginning on January 1, 2020, and subject to certain limitations; requiring the Maryland Department of Health, in consultation with certain stakeholders, to study and recommend ways to structure adult dental coverage so as to balance fiscal constraints with the dental needs of enrollees; and requiring the Department to report to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before January 1, 2019.”

- **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 and worked through the budget process to get the benefit incorporated into the governor’s 2019 budget. The budget was released January 18, 2018—without a dental benefit, and this bill was subsequently introduced. A dental benefit would dramatically increase access to care for our clients.

Income

- **Payment of the Minimum Wage Required (SB 543/HB 664)**

- **Purpose**

To increase the state minimum wage from \$10.10/hour in 2018 to \$15/hour by 2023

- **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 had committee hearings in both chambers in 2017, but in neither case made it out of committee. Sen. Madaleno and Del. Shelly Hettleman announced January 15 that they would introduce a bill in 2018 to raise the state’s lowest allowable wage from \$10.10 an hour to \$15 by 2023. They did January 30. Not only would this bill have a significant impact for our community, but as a nonprofit organization with its own wage floor, Health Care for the Homeless has an important and unique perspective on the importance and impact of this bill: Today, no one at Health Care for the Homeless earns less than \$16.65 an hour, slightly more than what the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development said was needed in 2016 to afford an efficiency apartment in Baltimore. And in the 15 years since we implemented our wage floor, we have tripled in size, our staff retention has improved and staff have taken fewer hardship loans against their retirement accounts.

- **Temporary Disability Assistance Program (TDAP) (HB 1615/SB 1232)**

- **Purpose**

To make TDAP an entitlement and over a number of years increase the benefit to match the TCA family of 1 benefit level (which is currently \$306 per month and generally increases by 1-2% each year).

- **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. Then the governor included in his 2019 budget (released January 17) a TDAP increase of \$10 per month beginning on July 1, 2018. Among many other procedural things, this year's bill seeks to increase the TDAP amount even more. As a result of Gov. Hogan's 2019 budget, starting this July 1, TDAP will go from \$185/mo. to \$195/mo. This bill increases TDAP further to bring it in line with Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA)—specifically \$306, the amount afforded TCA recipients for families of 1. SO, starting in 2020, the TDAP amount goes from \$195 (which reflects Hogan's increase for 2019) to 75% of \$306; in 2021, it goes to 85% of \$306; and in 2022 and beyond it will be \$306. 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.

Other bills we are actively supporting

- ***Ending Youth Homelessness Act of 2018 (HB 1224/SB 1218)***
- ***Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Clinical Services Provided by Certified Peer Recovery Specialists (HB 772/SB 765)***
- ***Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance - Coverage - Hepatitis C Drugs (SB 943)***