



**Danna E. Mauch, Ph.D.**  
President and CEO

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

June 7, 2022

The Honorable Aaron Michlewitz  
Chair, House Committee on Ways & Means  
24 Beacon Street, Room 243  
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Michael Rodrigues  
Chair, Senate Committee on Ways & Means  
24 Beacon Street, Room 212  
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Ann-Margaret Ferrante  
Vice Chair, House Committee on Ways & Means  
24 Beacon Street, Room 42  
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Cindy Friedman  
Vice Chair, Senate Committee on Ways & Means  
24 Beacon Street, Room 208  
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Todd Smola  
Ranking Minority Member  
House Committee on Ways & Means  
24 Beacon Street, Room 124  
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Patrick O'Connor  
Ranking Minority Member  
Senate Committee on Ways & Means  
24 Beacon Street, Room 419  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairs Michlewitz and Rodrigues, Vice Chairs Ferrante and Friedman, The Honorable Todd Smola and The Honorable Patrick O'Connor, and Honorable Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means:

**Re: MAMH Support for Behavioral Health Priorities in the FY23 Budget**

On behalf of the Massachusetts Association for Mental Health (MAMH), thank you for your ongoing leadership in addressing the needs of people with behavioral health conditions and their families. We are thrilled that both the House and Senate FY23 budgets are so strong for behavioral health, including over \$1 billion in resources to support a myriad of mental health and substance use programs. These dollars are particularly timely as we continue to experience an unprecedented behavioral health crisis, particularly among children and adolescents, in the wake of the COVID-19 viral pandemic.

We carefully analyzed the budget and considered the grave needs of youth and adults for behavioral health services. We respectfully concluded that there were several critical items that if funded would impact the crisis. The services for which we advocate are those that would serve to earlier address emerging conditions, preventing unnecessary clinical deterioration, crisis driven emergency room overuse, and police engagement in trying to solve clinical matters.

As you engage in the challenging work of the Conference Committee process, we write to urge you to support the following provisions, as outlined below, in the House (H.4701) and Senate (S.2915) FY23 budget proposals that will further address the behavioral health needs of people across the Commonwealth.

---

## Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS)

### Behavioral Health Crisis Helpline

MAMH strongly supports language that would establish a Behavioral Health Access and Crisis Intervention Trust Fund, as included in the Senate budget.

- The Senate bill amends G.L. c. 29 to establish a Behavioral Health Access and Crisis Intervention Trust Fund, to be administered by EOHHS, with funds to be used to support a statewide, payor-agnostic community behavioral health crisis system. That system includes the Behavioral Health Access Line, launching in January 2023. The helpline will connect people, regardless of insurance coverage, to behavioral health services, including urgent care and crisis intervention services, available 24/7 in mobile and community-based settings. The bill also amends G.L. c. 118E to allow EOHHS to assess a surcharge on payors of health care services in acute hospitals and ambulatory surgical centers, as one significant source of funding for the trust.

### EOHHS 4000-0300 Network of Care Massachusetts

MAMH requests level-funding of the FY22 GAA of \$550K to manage Network of Care Massachusetts. This amount is included in the House budget.

- Network of Care Massachusetts ([www.networkofcaremassachusetts.com](http://www.networkofcaremassachusetts.com)) is the singular place where all mental health, substance use, and related social services programs and organizations are curated into a state-wide online, user-friendly, searchable tool. It supports people in taking their first steps in accessing behavioral health care by helping them find reliable information on behavioral health resources and supports in their communities. Network of Care also provides information on how to navigate program eligibility requirements across state agencies and on how to apply for and maintain health insurance coverage. The searchable directory is complemented by an extensive library of health information, including over 30,000 high-quality articles, fact sheets, and interactive tools written by leading experts and organizations in their fields. Network of Care Massachusetts provides a crucial service for the people of the Commonwealth and supports the forthcoming Behavioral Health Access Line, part of the EOHHS Roadmap for Behavioral Health Reform.

### EOHHS 4000-0300 Middlesex County Restoration Center

MAMH requests funding for the Middlesex County Restoration Center in the amount of \$1M, as included in the Senate budget. Funding will support the continuation of a pilot to establish a county restoration center and program overseen by the Middlesex County Restoration Center Commission. The Center will accept adults with behavioral health conditions diverted from arrest/jail or emergency department (ED) Boarding. The Restoration Center procurement is now underway through EOHHS and Commonwealth Medicine.

- The Center will support ongoing law enforcement diversionary efforts across New England's most populous county while also expanding the community capacity for behavioral health (mental health and substance use) treatment. The Center will serve as a model for future

---

centers across the state. Restoration Centers also will expand the Commonwealth's urgent care capacity for people with behavioral health conditions, which is a goal of EOHHS's Roadmap for Behavioral Health Reform. The Roadmap establishes a front door through which individuals and families can access the range of comprehensive behavioral health services offered in the Commonwealth for community-based assessment and treatment.

#### **DMH 5042-5000 -- School Behavioral Health Technical Assistance Center**

MAMH requests level-funding of the FY22 GAA of \$150K for the School Behavioral Health Technical Assistance Center. The Senate allocated this amount, while the House allocated \$75K.

- The School Behavioral Health Technical Assistance Center was planned through a collaboration of MAMH and the Behavioral Health Integrated Resources for Children (BIRCh) Center of UMass Boston and UMass Amherst. The Center draws on the expertise of the state universities and other stakeholders in the education and behavioral health arenas and enhances the capacity of public schools to efficiently integrate behavioral health supports. This partnership improves access to community resources, promotes greater efficiency in utilization of services, and enhances the integration of non-academic supports across the school and community settings. A School-Based Behavioral Health Advisory Council guides the work of the Center, co-chaired by the BIRCh Center and the Children's Mental Health Campaign (CMHC).

#### **Reserve Accounts**

##### **1595-4512 Behavioral Health Outreach, Access and Support Trust Fund (BHOAST)**

MAMH requests \$20M to fund the BHOAST reserve account, as included in the Senate budget. We further request that the following accounts be funded at the levels indicated:

- DPH 4513-2020 -- Behavioral Health Outreach, Access and Support Trust Fund (BHOAST) funding of \$2.5M, as included in House budget language, to address Emergency Department (ED) mental health and behavioral health boarding through staffing investments in and rate incentives to fully operationalize inpatient mental health acute care beds, intensive community-based acute treatment, partial hospitalization, and crisis stabilization services, with priority to services for children and adolescents. Staffing investments must include those to promote a culturally and linguistically competent workforce across disciplines. Priority shall be given to grants supporting investment in underserved areas of the Commonwealth.
- DESE 7061-0028 -- \$6M (\$3M from general fund and \$3M from BHOAST), as provided in the Senate budget, for **Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) Grants to Schools (K-12)**. These are one-time grants to school districts, charter schools and educational collaboratives to adapt, expand or strengthen multi-tiered systems of support to respond to the social emotional and behavioral health needs of students, families, and educators.
- DOE 7066-1123 -- \$4M (\$2M from general fund and \$2M from BHOAST), as provided in the Senate budget, for **Mental Health Grants to Community Colleges and State Universities**. This account would fund, in equal amounts, student behavioral health services at state universities and community colleges including, but not limited to, 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.

MAMH also notes its support for these provisions, which provide crucial funding to address the behavioral health workforce development and ED/Crisis diversion services for youth and adults – making upstream/preventive investments to avoid costly crisis and institutional service use:

- DMH 5095-0017 Loan Forgiveness for Clinical Behavioral Health Workers -- \$20M in the House budget for a **loan forgiveness program**, as one of the important loan forgiveness and other workforce development initiatives in the budget.
- DMH 5042-5000 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services -- \$6M in a Senate earmark to expand a newly created **ED Diversion Program for youth**, whereby a clinical team meets with the child and family in the ED and assess to determine if DMH can provide supports that would allow the child to return home, avoiding an ED stay.
- DMH 5046-0000 Adult Mental Health and Support Services -- \$4M in a Senate earmark to expand a newly created **ED Diversion Program for adults**, whereby a clinical team provides the same service to adults in EDs.
- DPH 4512-2020 Municipal Public Safety Reform – support for the language in Amendment #558 of the Senate budget that addresses the **Equitable Approaches to Public Safety (EAPS) program** by establishing a preference, when EOPS awards grants for services to address behavioral health crises in the community, for municipalities who propose alternative emergency responses conducted by unarmed community-based human service or behavioral health providers who shall be unaccompanied by law enforcement but who may call on law enforcement as needed.

Finally, we take this opportunity to note our strong support for the budget priorities of the Children’s Mental Health Campaign and the Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance. These priorities compliment the priorities listed above and are equally essential to promote and ensure the good health of residents of the Commonwealth.

Thank you very much for your consideration of these budget items. Please do not hesitate to be in touch should you have any questions or would like additional information at [dannamauch@mamh.org](mailto:dannamauch@mamh.org).

Sincerely,



Danna Mauch, PhD  
President and CEO

c: The Honorable Ronald Mariano, Speaker, Massachusetts House of Representatives; The Honorable Karen Spilka, President, Massachusetts Senate; The Honorable Adrian Madaro and The Honorable Julian Cyr, Chairs, Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use, and Recovery