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CECIL COUNTY, MARYLAND

Office of the County Executive
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November 22, 2013

The Honorable Martin O'Malley
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21404

Dear Governor O'Malley,

We are writing to share again our tremendous appreciation to you for your recent offer to help us with solutions to Cecil County's high rates of substance abuse and drug overdoses. We are also writing to share that our community leaders are prepared to move forward with new initiatives to reduce substance abuse addiction/overdose in our community. We ask for your help to achieve these objectives.

The devastating impact of substance abuse on Cecil County residents, families, and communities is cumulative, and has significantly contributed to costly social, physical, mental, and public health problems. Confronting this enormous and multifaceted problem, our government leaders, our health, school and public safety officials, our social and behavioral health professionals, and our citizens are prepared to work actively and collaboratively to impact change. Our work on a comprehensive plan continues, and we will keep your office informed of our progress.

Cognizant of the State's FY15 budget timeframe, we are submitting these special funding requests for Cecil County directly to you.

Our plan focuses on a continuation and expansion of (A) prevention/early intervention, (B) treatment, (C) public safety/law enforcement, and (D) recovery support initiatives. We believe that our approach will increase resiliency of our youth and families, while reducing factors and conditions associated with addiction.

(A) Prevention / Early-Intervention:

- **Cecil County Neighborhood Youth Panel:** Cecil County requests continued funding from Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention for The Cecil County Neighborhood Youth Panel (NYP). The NYP is a juvenile diversion program, which offers first-time juvenile misdemeanor offenders the option of appearing before a panel of community volunteers rather than entering the juvenile court system. This excellent prevention program targeted toward youth under 18 has a 90%+ success rate and has been in Cecil County since 2000. The program has grown to handle 20-25% of the juvenile system load. Our mayors have met to discuss how to expand the program, and there have been recent discussions with expanding a partnership with our Boys & Girls Club organization. Unfortunately the State grant funding stream has shown instability year to year and there have been times notification of grant approval for the next fiscal year hasn't been received from DJS and GOCCP until June of the current fiscal year. Although additional funding is always appreciated, what we seek here is stability in the current grant funding. **Net impact to State's budget = \$0**
- **Early-Intervention Initiative for First Time Adolescent Offenders:** Additional resources for youth who do not qualify for the Neighborhood Panel are also needed. Cecil County does not promote sending young people into the juvenile system solely for the purpose of accessing services. However, when young people enter the criminal

justice system, and a substance abuse problem is not addressed, an opportunity is lost. With support from the Governor's office, officials at the Cecil County Health Department would implement a pilot program of early-intervention utilizing evidenced based Motivational Enhancement Therapy / Cognitive Behavioral Therapy - Five Sessions (MET/CBT-5). MET/CBT-5 has been identified as one of the most cost-effective approaches for youth. The target population for this pre-clinical service would be substance involved adolescents aged 14-18, who have been recently arrested. We believe that addiction and criminal behavior within our community is generational, and that our at-risk youth should be engaged timely within a continuum of care which prevents their conditions from escalating. Information from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration confirms that more than 90 percent of adults with current substance use disorders started using before the age of 18; approximately half began before age 15. A pilot MET/CBT-5 program would target intervention for youth within these critical ages to help prevent the escalation of substance use and re-offending. The county estimates that a minimum of fifty individuals would be served in the first year. **The projected cost to implement this initiative would be \$125,000, and includes expenses for staff and training.**

(B) Public Safety / Enforcement:

- **Dedicated Forensic Analyst**: Limited staff resources at the State Police laboratory in Pikesville, Maryland, have triggered delays in obtaining drug test results for local, county and state police working in Cecil County. Frequently, these delays result in the dismissal of criminal charges for drug dealers. The problem would be best addressed at this time with additional resources for the State Police. Accordingly, Cecil County officials request that additional funding be allocated to the Forensic Sciences Division of the Maryland State Police, for one additional full-time lab analyst dedicated to testing controlled dangerous substances collected in Cecil County. A dedicated Cecil County analyst would decrease the number of days between submission of a drug sample and delivery of test results. The additional staff support would also reduce backlogs in the analysis of forensic evidence, and help maintain the accuracy, reliability, and credibility of results obtained through forensic analysis. In consequence, fewer criminal charges against drug dealers would be dismissed for lack of evidence, and, as a result, access to controlled dangerous substances throughout our community would decrease. Cecil County Government would provide a 50% match for a new County dedicated analyst position in Pikesville. **The estimated expense for the State would be \$35,000.**

(C) Treatment:

- **Expand Residential Treatment Opportunities** – For the benefit of the entire Eastern Shore community, Cecil County officials request the re-opening of the East Wing at the A.F. Whitsitt Center, located on the grounds of the Upper Shore Community Mental Health Center, in Chestertown, Maryland. A.F. Whitsitt provides detoxification and residential care for adults with chemical dependency and co-occurring disorders. Expanding the program from the current 26 beds to 46 would help reduce the waiting list for persons in need of high and intermediate residential treatment. The estimated expense for additional beds at A.F. Whitsitt should be determined by the Kent County Health Department. **In addition to the expansion of the A.F. Whitsitt Center, Cecil County officials request \$100,000 for residential treatment purchase of care agreements with private providers in the region.**


(D) Recovery Support:

- **Recovery High School** - On completion of residential treatment, many of our students simply return to school, to the same situation and routine where their problems began. These students too often fail to engage in appropriate aftercare, are thrown back in with old friends, and relapse to substance use. One innovative solution for these students, and for others who would voluntarily enroll, includes a dedicated school for recovery. A recovery high school would offer a safe and sober alternative for students struggling to avoid falling back into old harmful routines. Students would complete their academic curriculum within an environment enhanced and acutely responsive to their needs, and the needs their families, for support and continuing counseling. Staff assigned to the recovery school would also coordinate related Maryland Student Assistance Program initiatives. When appropriate, the program would help students successfully transition back to a traditional school. The recovery high school would serve approximately 15 to 20 students in the first year, and be housed in an existing, but segregated, public school structure. We believe the school would expand to serve additional students in year two and three. **The estimated expense of \$275,000, would fund program development and first year salary expenses (including four full-time staff, including two teachers, one behavioral health counselor, and one**

peer recovery advocate; and three part-time staff including a vocational counselor, a family therapist, and a clinical supervisor).

The above initiatives represent proactive steps to interrupt unhealthy patterns of behavior, and improve the health of our community. Additional efforts to expand prevention, early intervention, treatment, public safety and recovery support will continue. Substance abuse is an enormous and multifaceted problem, involving myriad factors and conditions. Effectively addressing these challenges requires an equally wide variety of responses. The very wise Albert Einstein once said: "In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity." Cecil County believes that a strong partnership with the State in finding the necessary financial resources will maximize opportunities for success.

Sincerely,



Tari Moore
County Executive

Cc:
Joshua Sharfstein, MD, Secretary, DHMH
Cecil County Council: Robert Hodge, Alan McCarthy, Joyce Bowsbey, Michael Dunn, Diana Broomell
Cecil County Delegation: Senator Nancy Jacobs, Senator Steve Hershey, Delegate Mike Smigiel, Delegate Jay Jacobs, Delegate Dave Rudolph, Delegate Mary-Dulany James, Delegate Glenn Glass, Delegate Steve Arentz
Barry Janney, Sheriff, Cecil County
Stephanie Garrity, Health Officer, Cecil County
Ken Collins, Special Assistant to the Executive for Drug Policy
Nick Ricciuti, Director, Social Services
D'Ette Devine, Superintendent, Cecil County Public Schools
Mayor Joe Fisona, Mayor's Drug Task Force