



Wrap Up of 2025 Maryland General Assembly Session

The 2025 Maryland General Assembly Session opened with news of a \$3 billion budget deficit, an unprecedented amount for an economy not in recession. It did not take long to understand that changes at the federal level would also impact budget and policy decisions during the 90-day Session. In the end, the General Assembly and Governor produced a state budget that included a reduction of \$1.6 billion in General Funds and will generate more than \$1.2 billion in taxes and fee increases. There were also changes made in how the Blueprint for Maryland's Future will continue to be rolled out, a delay in the implementation of the Family and Medical Leave Insurance program, and the use of money from the Rainy Day Fund to pass a balanced budget and partially address future projected future deficits.

FY 2026 Budget

The budget for behavioral health services overall was generally spared with regard to budget cuts. There was a surprise proposed increase in the provider reimbursement rate in the Governor's budget as introduced, and a not-so-surprising reversal when the budget was passed. In the end, level funding was a good place to be given the size of the budget deficit.

The final version of the budget also maintained the bulk of funding for behavioral health services to children in schools. While the Governor proposed to cut the \$130 million mandate to \$40 million, and the House accepted that cut, the Senate set the funding level at \$100 million. The Senate's higher appropriation prevailed.

Attention will need to be paid in the coming years to the issue of Opioid Restitution Fund (ORF) money being used to supplant activities paid for with General Funds. This supplantation is explicitly prohibited in state law, but took place with regard to the FY 2025 and FY 2026 budgets. While the uses of the funds are appropriate – money for the state's Buprenorphine Initiative and for treatment for people in two state correctional facilities – the use of \$7.4 million in ORF dollars in FY 2026 for things that should be funded otherwise is a problem to prevent in the future.

Because of the impact of federal actions that have already taken place, plus the ones on the horizon, the General Assembly fully expects to hold a special session in the fall to address both the impact on the state budget and the need to adjust policies in response.

Legislation That Passed

Opioid Response

- Public Health - Use of Opioid Restitution Fund and Training Under the Overdose Response Program (HB 729/SB 594) – This bill was introduced at the request of NCADD-Maryland. It better aligns the allowable expenditures of State ORF money to the national settlement agreements, adds a focus on activities that address racial disparities, and includes a change in Overdose Response Program trainings to include an emphasis on compassionate overdose response. (Sponsors: Delegate Sandy Roseberg and Senator Arthur Ellis)
- Opioid Restitution Fund - Interactive Dashboard (HB 798/SB 589) – This bill requires the creation of a dashboard on the website of the health department showing the state and local government expenditures of ORF money. (Sponsors: Delegate Mary Lehman and Senator Arthur Ellis)
- Public Health - Buprenorphine - Training Grant Program and Workgroup (HB 1131) – This legislation creates a program for a county to apply to MDH for a grant to be used to train paramedics to administer buprenorphine. The Maryland Office of Overdose Response (MOOR) must establish a workgroup to study access to buprenorphine with a report due before the end of the year. (Sponsor: Delegate Joe Vogel)
- Commission on Behavioral Health Care Treatment and Access - Workgroups (HB 1066) – This bill requires the Commission on Behavioral Health Care Treatment and Access to establish an additional workgroup on improvement of health, social, and economic outcomes related to substance use. (Sponsor: Delegate Sheila Ruth)

Workforce

- Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact (HB 345/SB 174) – This legislation, introduced at the request of the Maryland Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, will enable the state to join the national compact allowing licensed social workers to provide services to people in other compact states. (Sponsors: Delegate Ken Kerr and Senator Joanne Benson)
- Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2025 (HB 869/SB 372) – These bills make permanent the current allowable uses of telehealth in Maryland. This includes the use of audio-only and payment parity. (Sponsors: Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk and Senator Pam Beidle)

Parity

- Balance Billing (HB 11/SB 902) – The priority of the Maryland Parity Coalition removed the sunset on the law passed in 2022 that prohibits an out-of-network provider from billing a patient the difference between the cost of their and the reimbursement from the insurance carrier. (Sponsors: Delegate Sheree Sample-Hughes and Senator Malcolm Augustine)

Collateral Consequences

- Criminal Records – Expungement and Maryland Judiciary Case Search (Expungement Reform Act of 2025) (HB 499/SB 432) – This bill from the Governor alters various waiting periods for the filing of a petition for expungement, expands the list of misdemeanor convictions eligible for expungement and expands the factors a court must consider. (Sponsor: The Moore Administration)

Protection of Health Care

- Maryland Health Insurance Coverage Protection Commission – Established (HB 718) – This Commission is intended to monitor potential and actual federal changes to the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, the federal Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act, Medicaid, the Maryland Children’s Health Program, Medicare, and the Maryland All-Payer Model in order to assess the impact of such changes and provide recommendations for State and local action to protect access to affordable health coverage. (Sponsor: Delegate Sandy Rosenberg)
- Health Insurance - Preventive Services - Enforcement Authority (HB 974) – This bill is intended to protect coverage of preventive services without cost-sharing requirements in the situation where changes at the federal level would reduce access. (Sponsor: Delegate Emily Shetty)

Legislation That Did Not Pass

- Gaming - Problem Gambling - Prevalence Study and Fund Revenue (HB 700/SB 706) – This bill, introduced at the request of NCADD-Maryland, would have required revenue from fantasy competition and sports wagering to be deposited into the Problem Gambling Fund, and require a prevalence study specifically on mobile gambling. While the Senate passed the bill for the second year in a row, the House took no action. (Sponsors: Delegate Nick Allen and Senator Craig Zucker)
- Overdose Prevention Sites (HB 845/SB 83) – This legislation, led by the Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition, would have authorized up to 6 pilot programs in the state. The bills died without votes in their respective committees. (Sponsors: Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk and Senator Shelly Hettleman)
- Paraphernalia Decriminalization (HB 556/SB 370) – This bill, led by the Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition, would have decriminalized the possession of drug paraphernalia for personal use. (Sponsors: Delegate Karen Simpson and Senator Cory McCray on behalf of the Baltimore City Administration)

- Criminal Law - Distribution of Heroin or Fentanyl Causing Serious Bodily Injury or Death (Victoria, Scottie, Ashleigh, and Yader's Law) (HB 1398/SB 604) – This bill that NCADD-Maryland opposed would have created new enhanced criminal penalty for those found liable for distributing drugs that led to an overdose. NCADD-Maryland opposed this legislation as criminal penalties have proven to be ineffective in reducing overdoses and instead, deter people from seeking help. (Sponsors: Delegate Chris Tomlinson and Senator Jeff Waldstreicher)
- Educational Institutions - Opioid Overdose-Reversing Medications - Policy Requirements (Protecting Our Kids From Overdoses Act) (HB 852) – This bill would have allowed students to possess naloxone and also update educational material related to the benefits of administering naloxone. (Sponsor: Delegate Joe Vogel)
- Correctional Services - Medication-Assisted Treatment (HB 1084/SB 942) – The Maryland Association of Counties again led efforts to require money from the ORF to reimburse counties for the expense of providing medication-assisted treatment to people in local detention centers. (Sponsors: Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk and Senator Charles Sydnor)