

Recovery Day 2017 Opening Remarks – 09/08/2017

Good morning peers, treatment partners, community members, and program administrators.

Thank you for joining us today as we officially kick off Recovery Month 2017. I cannot tell you how excited I am to see so smiling faces in today's crowd. Coming together today are people from all across the spectrum of our Behavioral Health Recovery Community.

We have our recovery allies who help support our movement by sharing our message of hope with others. They break down stigma in the community and motivate others to join us as we work together; building recovery capital across our state.

We also have our dedicated Peer Workforce in attendance today. Peers have the unique ability to connect with and relate to individuals who struggle with the idea of seeking or maintaining recovery. The effect of the relationship between a peer specialist and an individual seeking recovery is truly a gift in itself. Peers are able to utilize a unique combination of lived experience to connect with an individual. Using available Recovery Supports to help ease internalized fears and reduce the stigma associated with initiating or maintain ongoing recovery, peers offer a unique invitation into Recovery.

Maryland is proud to recognize the value of Peers within our Behavioral Health workforce. As such we are looking towards innovative training projects and utilizing funds to enhance existing recovery support programs which will expand Peer Support in areas where it is needed most.

As the Director of the Office of Consumer Affairs, I am proud to say that I walk with all of you in your efforts to spread the hope recovery offers. Not only as a Leader in the State System but also as a person in long term recovery myself.

It is because of my recovery that I am standing in front of you today.

It is because of my recovery that I am able to be a son, grandson, brother and husband.

It is because of my recovery that I am a healthy and contributing member of my work community, the community I live in and the Recovery Community at large.

However, it is because of OUR recovery and the hope that many more will join us on this journey, that we come together today and celebrate Recovery Month!

As you are aware, the State of Maryland is seeing the devastating consequences resulting from the Opioid Epidemic affecting our country. The Behavioral Health Administration is committed to utilizing Peers and other Recovery Supports Services as we plan out and implement programs expanding access to recovery and breaking down the stigma being experienced across our system and communities.

We all know that stigma robs people of their ability to live self-determined lives and participate in their recovery process. This stigma also causes people to become less well and more isolated.

Now more than ever we need our Recovery Advocates to come to the front of the line and share innovative ideas, advocate expanding supports that are effective, and remain vigilant for processes that are moving us in the wrong direction.

We are more effective at helping others, when we break out of our silos and work together on efforts that help all members of our growing community. We are one voice, with one mission, that is inclusive of multiple recovery pathways!

The evolution of the Peer Movement is in full swing and Maryland continues to look at how our Peers are being utilized across the State. Peers are being employed in more diverse settings and the results are evident. There is no wrong place for someone to turn when they realize they are ready for Recovery. To echo this message, The State of Maryland wants to ensure there are resources and supports available anywhere a person may turn when seeking wellness. Peers are engaging individuals in settings such as hospitals, jails, overdose response calls, the woods, and so many others. We want to make sure that when someone reaches out for help, the hand of recovery is there to meet them.

As part of the Administration's commitment to growing the Peer workforce, the Deputy Secretary of Behavioral Health, Dr. Barbara Bazron, completed a series of five listening sessions across the State. Her intention was to meet with and hear directly from those providing Peer Recovery Support Services. This way she could identify barriers affecting those delivering this vital intervention. As a result of the candid feedback given by peers combined with the Deputy Secretary's commitment to expanding our Peer Workforce, a plan was developed identifying ten priorities which will help to grow upon the foundation that Peers have already laid across the state. Those priorities include the development of a Peer job classification that will provide a career pathway for those working within the state system along with a standard of practice for anyone providing recovery support services in Maryland.

We are also looking at ways to enhance a supervisor's knowledge and skills for those working with or directly supervising Peers. We want to ensure that those who are supporting individuals who are seeking recovery using lived experience, are also being supported in a manner that is consistent with and which honors the Recovery Principles we work and live by.

So today, we come together to celebrate each other and the accomplishments our recovery has allowed us to experience. We come together to remember those who are no longer with us but whose hard work and recovery will have lasting impact on our system of care. Today we come together to ensure that what we have experienced as a result of recovery is available to those still seeking a life of wellness and hope. Today we come together to amplify the fact that Prevention Works, Treatment is Effective, and that people CAN and DO recover!

It is now my privilege to share with you Governor Hogan's Proclamation of Recovery Month.

National Recovery Month

September 2017

WHEREAS, behavioral health is an essential part of health and one's overall wellness; and

WHEREAS, prevention of mental and substance use disorders works, treatment is effective, and people recover in our area and around the nation; and

WHEREAS, preventing and overcoming mental and substance use disorders is essential to achieving healthy lifestyles, both physically and emotionally; and

WHEREAS, we must encourage relatives and friends of people with mental and/or substance use disorders to implement preventive measures, recognize the signs of a problem, and guide those in need to appropriate treatment and recovery support services; and

WHEREAS, an estimated 827,000 individuals in Maryland are affected by these conditions; and

WHEREAS, to help more people achieve and sustain long-term recovery, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), and the Maryland Department of Health, Behavioral Health Administration invite all residents of Maryland to participate in National Recovery Month (Recovery Month); and

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Larry Hogan, GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF MARYLAND, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the laws of Maryland, do hereby proclaim the month of September 2017 as

NATIONAL RECOVERY MONTH

In Maryland and call upon the people of Maryland to observe this month with appropriate programs, activities, and ceremonies to support this year's *Recovery Month* theme, "*Join the Voices for Recovery: Strengthen Families and Communities.*"

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this 8th day of September in the year of our Lord two thousand seventeen, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two-hundred and forty-second.

What an amazing proclamation from our Governor!