

**House Budget Statement**  
**2/22/16**

**SOME WACMHC/CHNW LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES SUPPORTED IN THE HOUSE BUDGET:**

- **No Cuts to Safety Net**
- **Loan Repayment Program Expanded for Behavioral Health Providers, But at a Lower Amount**

**WACMHC/CHNW LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES NOT SUPPORTED IN THE HOUSE BUDGET:**

- **Behavioral Health Integration – Middle Adopter Regions**

Statement

Community health centers are pleased the House budget proposal continues to prioritize the health care safety net, protecting existing funding for programs such as Medicaid, despite a lowered revenue forecast and spending mandates. But health centers are disappointed the budget doesn't do more to strengthen the early intervention side of the mental health system.

The budget makes some progress in addressing behavioral health needs by expanding the Health Professional Loan Repayment program to include behavioral health specialists, such as social workers and psychologists. This small investment will help attract mental health providers to work in underserved rural and urban areas, where provider shortages continue to hinder access to care for low-income Washingtonians. While we are disappointed that the funding level is lower than requested, it's a step toward building the proper workforce to integrate behavioral health into primary care settings.

The budget fails to accelerate the pace toward behavioral health integration in key regions. Health centers are advocating for funding for King and Pierce Counties and North Central Washington to achieve behavioral health integration a full three years ahead of the state's goal of 2020, in order to generate valuable learning.

In addressing our state's current mental health crisis, community health centers urge the House and the Senate to fund these prevention and early intervention solutions that give taxpayers a big return on their investment.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:**

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