

Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

November 20, 2017

For Immediate Release
PRESS STATEMENT

ODMHSAS Statement Regarding Budget and Governor's Veto of HB1019

The Governor's action does provide temporary resources to shrink the ODMHSAS funding gap to approximately \$21.5 million. That will carry the agency into the spring, but will still involve cuts to vital treatment services if a funding solution is not found. We must avoid additional cuts to mental health and substance use services now and in the future, and support all of our state leaders working to find sustainable funding. These services reduce costs to other state agencies and community programs, keep Oklahomans working and contributing to our economy, and save lives.

We have not yet developed a final plan on what these cuts would entail. ODMHSAS has absorbed funding cuts in three out of the last four years and has seen its baseline appropriations reduced. This impacts the availability of core services for Oklahomans in need. It is important that we fix this.

ODMHSAS began this process with a \$75 million budget hole as a result of the cigarette fee being overturned as unconstitutional. The Governor signed a bill in early November to reduce that gap to \$52 million. The Governor's veto preserving portions of HB1019 further shrinks that gap to \$21.5 million. This gets us another step closer to addressing funding needs, and there is now opportunity to find compromise and reduce that deficit to zero. Oklahoma cannot afford to continue cutting these lifesaving services without experiencing devastating consequences. Look at the headlines. People are dying. We are spending significantly more as a state to address the negative consequences of inaction, than what we would spend to provide prevention and treatment services in the first place. In the end, all of us want a healthier Oklahoma, now and in the future.

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