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Alliance for Tax Fairness releases Top Ten List of Urgent Needs

Special Session to determine Maryland's capacity to address its priorities

[Annapolis, MD] – The Alliance for Tax Fairness held a press conference on Tuesday, October 30, 2007 at 12:00 p.m. on Lawyer's Mall outside the State House in Annapolis to release the "Top Ten List of Urgent Needs" in Maryland. The press conference took place on the second day of a Maryland General Assembly special session that will determine the state's capacity to address its most pressing priorities for years to come.

Maryland is now ranked as the wealthiest state in the nation, yet this year has seen horrific headlines about Marylanders in need not getting the help they should and urgent priorities remaining unaddressed. Senior citizens were reported by the Sun to be dying in uninspected assisted living facilities, despite a state law mandating annual inspections. A 12-year-old boy died because his parents couldn't afford to take him to a dentist, one of thousands of families in similar dire straits due to inability to afford needed medical care. Schools throughout Maryland are so old and run-down that they are unfit to learn or teach in. The Chesapeake Bay remains in critical condition. 546 Marylanders died last year in a plague of violence that also included over 38,000 reported incidents of violent crime, making Maryland the 3rd most violent state in the nation. Disabilities services waiting lists. Underfunded programs to teach basic literacy to adults. Skyrocketing University of Maryland tuition. Foster kids in danger due to overworked and underpaid staff. And the list goes on.

Advocates from throughout the state gathered Tuesday at noon outside the State House to read the Top Ten List of Urgent Needs and let the victims of state neglect tell their own stories.

The Alliance for Tax Fairness was formed earlier this year to advocate for solutions to the state fiscal crisis that go beyond just plugging the \$1.7 billion budget hole so that Maryland can make long-delayed investments in areas that are critical to Maryland's future, and that do so in ways that are fair to low- and middle-income working families and retirees. The full list of Alliance members is available online at www.AllianceForTaxFairness.org. The Alliance for Tax Fairness will also be sponsoring a Statewide Town Hall Meeting on the state fiscal crisis on Tuesday, November 6 at 6:00 p.m. at Annapolis Elementary School.

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Alliance for Tax Fairness

Top Ten List

of Urgent Needs in Maryland

- ❖ **Health Care:** Children dying because they cannot afford care – Deamonte Driver died of a toothache
- ❖ **Health Care:** 800,000 with no health insurance
- ❖ **Education:** 70,000 children attend classes in trailers; many schools not suited for teaching or learning
- ❖ **Higher Ed:** UMCP tuition up 52% in four years
- ❖ **Environment:** Chesapeake Bay in critical condition
- ❖ **Crime:** MD is 3rd most violent state in the nation
- ❖ **Infrastructure:** 27% of MD bridges structurally deficient or functionally obsolete vs. 12% in MN
- ❖ **Seniors** are dying from abuse and neglect in uninspected assisted living facilities
- ❖ **Seniors:** 9,700 waiting for in-home services so they can stay out of more expensive nursing homes
- ❖ **Disabilities:** 16,000 developmentally disabled on waiting lists for help because MD ranks 44th in aid
- ❖ **Foster Care:** Kids at risk due to overburdened staff
- ❖ **Illiteracy:** 20% of adults read below 4th grade level, thousands waiting in line to get help
- ❖ **Mental Health:** Aid cuts penny-wise & pound-foolish – many end up homeless or in jail at public expense
- ❖ **Housing Affordability:** Maryland has the highest average household income but is among the least affordable states for home ownership or rental

Alliance for Tax Fairness

Top Ten List of Urgent Needs in Maryland

Details & Contacts for Media Follow-up

Item	Spokesperson	Details
Health Care: Children dying because they cannot afford care – Deamonte Driver died of a toothache	Laurie Norris, Attorney Public Justice Center One N Charles St., Suite 200 Baltimore, MD 21201 410-625-9409, ext. 223 norrisl@publicjustice.org	A 12-year-old boy, Deamonte Driver, died this year because he could not afford dental care. He was one of the 1.6 million Marylanders who have no health insurance or health insurance that is inadequate to meet basic needs.
Health Care: 800,000 with no health insurance	Matthew Celentano Deputy Director Health Care for All 410-235-9000 443-253-7988 c	800,000 Marylanders lack health insurance. 139,000 are children. Most are in families where at least one adult is working. They are not poor enough to qualify for Maryland's highly restricted Medicaid program and they do not receive health insurance from their jobs. Marylanders with insurance pay \$1,000 per year per family to cover the costs of the uninsured, whose costs are higher because their care tends to be emergency rather than preventive.
Education: 70,000 children attend classes in trailers; many schools not suited for teaching or learning	Diana Saquella Maryland State Teachers Assn 410-353-9690	The Thornton investment has produced real progress throughout Maryland, especially in test scores, teacher qualifications, and class sizes. But Thornton does not include any funds at all for capital needs – repairing and rebuilding the hundreds of schools throughout the state that have fallen into disrepair.
Higher Ed: UMCP tuition up 52% in four years	Amy Hartman UMCP student ahart13@umd.edu 301-789-5981	UMCP tuition rose rapidly every year under the previous administration to make up for shortfalls in state funding.
Environment: Chesapeake Bay in critical condition	Jennifer Bevan-Dangel Patuxent Riverkeeper 410-303-7954 Jennifer@paxriverkeeper.org	In addition to our \$1.7 billion structural deficit, Maryland is also suffering from an environmental deficit. The Chesapeake Bay's health is in critical condition, with a "dead zone" stretching nearly the entire length of the Bay. The agencies created to protect our environment, the Departments of Natural Resources and the Environment, are severely under-funded. Our land conservation programs are at risk, even as we lose our open spaces faster than ever before. Maryland's transportation system is also in serious trouble, with far more transit needed for a new DC "Purple Line," a robust rail system in the Baltimore area, and expanded capacity for the MARC commute.
Crime: MD is 3rd most violent state in the nation		546 Marylanders died last year in a plague of violence that also included over 38,000 reported incidents of violent crime, making Maryland the 3 rd most violent state in the nation.
Infrastructure: 27% of MD bridges structurally deficient or functionally obsolete vs. 12% in MN		Infrastructure: In Minnesota, scene of the recent bridge collapse, the U.S. Dept. of Transportation says that 12% of all bridges are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. In Maryland the equivalent figure is 27%. (Time, 9/07)

Item	Spokesperson	Details
Seniors are dying from abuse and neglect in uninspected assisted living facilities	Charlie Culbertson President United Seniors of Maryland 410-823-6432	Baltimore Sun, 8/18/07: About three-quarters of Maryland's roughly 1,500 licensed "assisted-living facilities" for the elderly went unchecked by regulators despite a state law that requires annual inspections, according to a legislative audit released yesterday. Last year, Kronmiller's office submitted a report to a legislative oversight committee that described harsh conditions and poor treatment at some assisted-living centers in Maryland. The report described how a resident of one facility was left unsupervised on a porch during a summer heat wave until the person's body temperature reached 107 degrees. In another case, residents were locked in a boiler room because of behavioral problems. One elderly resident of an assisted-living center in Millersville died in 2003 as a result of what Kronmiller called "one of the worst cases" of patient neglect she had ever seen. The 84-year-old woman was taken to the hospital with severe bedsores over much of her body, gangrene in one foot and maggots in the other. She died two days later. The center's owner pleaded guilty last year to felony neglect and other charges and was sentenced to 18 months of house arrest. The report said regulators attended one seminar in which 500 people were told that government funding of health care was the next way to "get rich quick." A flier for the seminar advertised: "Make Fast Cash In Assisted Living." Regulators say they have been increasing the number of inspections but have never had enough staff to visit and review every facility annually.
Seniors: 9,700 waiting for in-home services so they can stay out of more expensive nursing homes		9,700 people waiting for use of Medicaid waiver to get services they need to age in place instead of having to be taken care of in a more-expensive, publicly funded nursing home.
Disabilities: 16,000 developmentally disabled on waiting lists for help because MD ranks 44th in aid	Susan O'Brien - mom & son on wait list plus Ken Capone, Public Policy Coordinator for People On the Go, Member, Maryland Developmental Disabilities Coalition	Examiner 7-24-07: Maryland ranks 44th in the nation in state assistance to the developmentally disabled as a percentage of state wealth, according to a University of Colorado study. About 20,000 affected Marylanders receive some state-funded help — including those with Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, mental retardation and cognitive impairment. At least 16,000 others are on waiting lists.
Foster Care: Kids at risk due to overburdened staff	Flo Jones Foster Care Caseworker 410.655.4944	Children are at risk as a direct result of staffing cuts and huge caseloads that make it impossible to give children in need the attention they need.
Illiteracy: 20% of adults read below 4th grade level, thousands waiting in line to get help	Melissa Chalmers Broome, Senior Policy Advocate, Job Opportunities Task Force 410.234.8046 (o) 410.236.6079 (c) melissa@jotf.org Sonia Socha Executive Director of the S. Balt. Learning Center and the Policy Chair for MAACCE (MD Association for Adult Community and Continuing Education) Paul Martin, graduate of the S. Balt. Learning Center	Functional Illiteracy threatens Maryland's competitiveness and quality of life. Maryland may have the highest percentage of college graduates in America, but the National Adult Literacy Survey reports that 20% of Marylanders function at the lowest literacy level, reading at less than a fourth grade level. The result is that thousands of adults who are motivated to better themselves but lack the means are stuck in poverty-wage jobs or unemployed. A family headed by a high school dropout earns about 50% less than a family headed by an individual with a high school diploma. High school dropouts earn approximately \$7,000 a year less than high school graduates. Meanwhile, businesses report that workers' lack of basic skills impacts negatively on work quality and profits. Yet only 4% of the target population in Maryland receives adult education and literacy services each year, while 4,000 to 5,000 adults sit on long waiting lists. Maryland ranks at the bottom with Mississippi and Alabama in terms of state funding per student.

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<p>Mental Health: Aid cuts penny-wise & pound-foolish – many end up homeless or in jail at public expense</p>	<p>Barbara Miller, Board Member, Threshold Services</p> <p>Lori Doyle , COO of Mosaic Community Services</p> <p>Susan O'Brien O'Brien & Associates Public Relations, LLC 111 Cathedral St., Suite 204 Annapolis, MD 21401 443-254-3900 susanobrienpr@comcast.net</p>	<p>Mosaic Community Services serves more than 3,000 people and has 389 staff. Her remarks will center on the fact that they can't match wages paid at Walmart, their turnover rate is about 31 percent, 1/3 of new hires don't last more than 90 days, openings stay vacant for more than 6 months, it can take more than a year to find a child psychiatrist to serve children with mental illness. This is a result of low state reimbursement rates exacerbated by no cost-of-living increases and the mediocrity of private insurance coverage.</p> <p>* Maryland's network of community-based mental health programs serves 92,000 children and adults who use our state's public mental health system. The cuts in the Doomsday Budget would eliminate or reduce real services and hurt some of Maryland's most vulnerable children and adults. Revenues are needed to avoid further cuts to mental health services, which have already suffered from previous budget cuts.</p> <p>* If revenues are not found and cuts continue, hundreds of additional individuals with mental illness will then try to get care from hospital emergency rooms and high-cost psychiatric units; others will end up homeless or in the correctional system.</p> <p>* Among service providers, employment turnover averages 30-40 percent, vacancies remain in critical direct care and clinical positions, and staff compensation is still 10-20 percent below that for comparable state positions.</p> <p>* Public mental health services have always been under funded. Not only should they be protected from cuts, they should be first in line for new revenues. MHA cuts will cause significant harm to Maryland citizens with mental illness. Mental health should not absorb a disproportionate share of the burden. The Governor's Doomsday Budget suggests \$50 million in possible cuts to MHA's budget - fully 71 percent of overall health service cuts listed for all state agencies.</p>
<p>Housing Affordability at risk in much of Maryland</p>	<p>Trudy McFall Maryland Affordable Housing Coalition Trudy@homesforamerica.org</p>	<p>Maryland has the highest average household income but is among the least affordable places in the United States to live. Both homeownership and rental housing are increasingly unable to be afforded by low and moderate income households as well as by middle and "workforce" households. The supply of affordable housing is shrinking, costs are escalating and the State's funding for housing has declined in the last decade.</p>