NEWS RELEASE AND STATEMENT ON ALCOHOLISM

August 31, 1967

Governor Agnew called today for a broad and energetic attack by the State on the problem of alcoholism in Maryland.

He said a comprehensive program will be developed by the administration for presentation to the 1968 Maryland Legislature and that the aid of industry, labor and other sectors of the general public will be enlisted for an overall campaign.

"It is time we recognize alcoholism for what it is — a sickness that saps and debilitates our society, and not a crime that can be controlled by filling jails with persons arrested for public drunkenness," the Governor said in a statement.

Governor Agnew said that a report he requested from the State Department of Mental Hygiene on alcoholism, received this week, points up the scope of the problem in Maryland.

"The Department estimates that there are approximately 100,000 alcoholics in Maryland and that fewer than 7,000 of these have been treated in specialized facilities, public or private," he said.

"No effort is being made to locate, identify and treat the remaining 93,000, including an estimated 42,000 in industry, who are losing time from work.

"A recent study indicates that alcoholics and their families account for $6,000,000 annually in the State's welfare budget, with no specialized services or attempt to restore them to economic independence.

"In all of Maryland there is only one specialized unit outside the four State mental hospitals for emergency treatment of acutely intoxicated alcoholics — a small, private service in Provident Hospital in Baltimore.

"Throughout the State there are only 16 halfway houses for alcoholics, all of them privately operated.

"Some commendable efforts have been made by the State. and by public and private agencies in Baltimore City and several counties, to cope with this problem, but these have been meager in relation to its magnitude.

"We have the resources and the knowledge to do an effective job if we apply the will to accomplish it. I commit this administration to that end."