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ASSOCIATION
FOR BEHAVIORAL
HEALTHCARE

June 6, 2018

Chairman Jeffrey Sanchez
House Committee on Ways and Means
State House, Room 243
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Stephen Kulik, Vice Chair
House Committee on Ways and Means
State House, Room 238
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Todd Smola, Ranking Member
House Committee on Ways and Means
State House, Room 124
Boston, MA 02133

Re: FY 2019 Budget

Dear Chairman Sanchez, Vice Chair Kulik and Representative Smola:

ABH is a statewide association representing over eighty community-based mental health and addiction treatment provider organizations. Our members are the primary providers of publicly-funded behavioral healthcare services in the Commonwealth, serving approximately 81,000 Massachusetts residents daily and over three-quarters of a million residents annually while employing 37,500 people.

Thank you for your strong commitment to both mental health and addiction treatment funding in the final version of the House Budget. Every day our members experience more demand for services than they are able to provide which is why it is vital for the Commonwealth to commit additional funding to expanding access to behavioral health services.

Investing in the community system is essential if Massachusetts is able to achieve its goals of better quality care at lower costs. Towards that end, ABH and our members request your support of the following during FY 2019 conference committee deliberations:

MASSHEALTH OUTPATIENT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

Please include the **Senate** directive of \$4 million for the **outpatient mental health and addiction treatment system** at MassHealth (line item 4000-0700).

ABH continues to be concerned about the long-term viability of outpatient mental health and addiction services due to the historic and systemic underfunding of this service. Outpatient treatment is the foundation of the community-based delivery system upon which all other services are built. Unfortunately, chronically low rates of reimbursement are negatively impacting access to this service.

The Baker Administration has increased rates for outpatient behavioral health paid for through the MassHealth managed care organizations, but fee-for-service MassHealth was not included in this increase. It is estimated that MassHealth needs \$7 million to increase fee-for-service rates to the same level as managed care rates, so this \$4 million earmark is essential to begin to alleviate this disparity between MassHealth payers.

BUREAU OF SUBSTANCE ADDICTION SERVICES (BSAS)

Thank you for the Legislature's continued investment and commitment to the addiction treatment system in the Commonwealth. We are grateful for the additional funding included by both the House and Senate to support the Massachusetts Access to Recovery (MA-ATR) program as well as funding for five new recovery centers.

Please support the **House** appropriation of \$5 million for the **jail diversion program** line item 4512-0202. The goal of this program is to offer intensive addiction treatment for individuals involved in the criminal justice system. An expansion of this program aligns with the goals of criminal justice legislation that was recently signed into law by expanding a program that diverts individuals from incarceration.

As you know, the opioid epidemic continues to ravage our state and these additional resources are vital in the fight against the epidemic.

DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH (DMH):

ABH is very grateful to both the House and the Senate for approving a historic increase of \$93.7 million for adult community services at the Department of Mental Health (5046-0000), including \$62.3 million for the new Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS) program.

This proposed funding is a critical component of the Department's efforts to redesign and strengthen the community system that serves the most vulnerable individuals in Massachusetts living with a mental illness. The new ACCS system of care will provide more intensive clinical and peer supports to DMH clients. ACCS will also ensure that such services are available equally across the Commonwealth.

This increase for DMH rightfully acknowledges that the Commonwealth needs to make significant new financial investments to ensure that DMH and its community providers succeed in this critical endeavor.

DHCD RENTAL SUBSIDIES FOR DMH CLIENTS

Please support the **Senate** appropriation of \$6,548,125 for the DHCD Rental Subsidies for DMH clients' line item **(7004-9033)**. Access to stable housing is an essential component of recovery and

individuals in DMH community placements need these subsidies to live successfully in the community.

INDIVIDUAL PROGRAMATIC EARMARKS

ABH and our member organizations strongly urge the House to remove all earmarks that were included for individual organizations in the FY2018 budget. Individual, organizational earmarking is an unfair process that singles out providers to receive state funding without requiring them to participate in the fair and open bidding process that state agencies oversee.

The proliferation of earmarks takes critical public mental health and addiction treatment funding away from the strategic, measured investments state agencies plan to make in new and existing services and can prevent agencies from maintaining programs that have been developed through the public bidding process.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vicker V. DiGravio III". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Vicker V. DiGravio III
President/CEO

Cc: Senate President Harriette Chandler
Speaker Robert DeLeo