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FOR BEHAVIORAL
HEALTHCARE

July 24, 2018

The Honorable Charles Baker
Governor of Massachusetts
State House, Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

Re: House Bill 4800 – Fiscal Year 2019 Budget

Dear Governor Baker:

The Association for Behavioral Healthcare (ABH) deeply appreciates your strong commitment to improving access to mental health and addiction treatment and services. We ask that you consider the following requests while reviewing the FY19 conference committee budget.

As you know, ABH is a statewide association representing more than 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, 1.5 million residents annually, and employing over 46,500 people.

Outside Section 68

ABH strongly supports this section, which allows the Director of Unemployment Insurance to develop and approve a hardship waiver for an employer experiencing a hardship under the new EMAC assessment. Special considerations could be given to *employers providing services that serve the public interest*, as well as small businesses, employers with seasonal employees and businesses with limited or variable revenue.

The EMAC assessment is a significant burden and an unfunded mandate on mental health and addiction treatment providers who rely on state funding to treat the most vulnerable individuals in our society. This section would allow the administration to offer waivers to organizations serving the public when appropriate.

Department of Mental Health

ABH requests your approval of the funding levels proposed by you in House 2 and adopted by the conference committee for the Department of Mental Health, which includes a \$94.7 million increase in funding for DMH adult community services.

Bureau of Substance Addiction Services

ABH requests your approval of the funding levels recommended by the conference committee for the Bureau of Substance Addiction Services. In particular, ABH strongly supports the new funding

included for the Massachusetts Access to Recovery (MA-ATR) program, additional funding for the BSAS jail diversion program, and funding for five new recovery centers.

MassHealth

ABH urges you to preserve the \$4 million programmatic earmark for MassHealth to align fee-for-service outpatient rates with MassHealth accountable and managed care products (4000-0700).

Chapter 257 Rate Reserve (1599-6903)

ABH thanks you for your continued support of the Chapter 257 rate reserve. We urge you to approve this funding.

DHCD Rental Subsidies for DMH Clients (7004-9033)

ABH urges you to approve the recommended appropriation of \$6,548,125. Access to housing is an essential component of the DMH system of care and this additional funding will expand access to more individuals who need this support.

Earmarks

We strongly urge you to veto all organizational earmarks included in the Department of Mental Health and Bureau of Substance Addiction Services line items that do not align with the Commonwealth's strategic plan. This funding would be better spent to preserve programs established through the fair and open bidding process that state agencies oversee. Individual, organizational earmarking is an unfair process that allows providers to receive state funding without requiring them to compete through a public bidding process.

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

As always, I am available (vdigravio@abhmass.org or 508-647-8385 x 11) to discuss this request should you or your staff have any questions about these matters.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Vicker V. DiGravio III
President/CEO

CC: Secretary Marylou Sudders, Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Assistant Secretary Daniel Tsai, MassHealth
Commissioner Monica Bharel, Department of Public Health
Commissioner Joan Mikula, Department of Mental Health