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ASSOCIATION
FOR BEHAVIORAL
HEALTHCARE

June 30, 2016

Governor Charles Baker
State House, Room 360
Boston, MA 02133

Re: FY 2017 Conference Committee 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 FY17 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.

Bureau of Substance Abuse Services

ABH is very concerned that the Legislature did not include appropriate funding to preserve existing programs at the Bureau of Substance Abuse Services (BSAS). By funding the substance abuse services fund (1595-4510) at only \$1 million and failing to include language allowing BSAS to deficit spend awaiting supplemental funding (Senate outside section 83), essential programs including opioid urgent care centers, recovery coaches in the emergency department, and peer and parent organizations such as the Massachusetts Organization for Addiction Recovery (MOAR) and Learn to Cope are facing devastating funding cuts.

We strongly urge you to veto all earmarks included in line item 4512-0200 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.

Department of Mental Health

ABH requests your approval of the funding levels recommended by the conference committee for the Department of Mental Health. We believe this will preserve all existing services, including the new community placements established in FY14 & FY15.

MassHealth

ABH urges you to continue to preserve funding for existing behavioral health services for MassHealth members and also approve language in line item 4000-0500 for an additional \$1 million for reimbursement rates for mental health and addiction providers in the Primary Care Clinician (PCC) plan.

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, while striking the language requiring contracts between EOHHS and providers to include detailed employee salary data.

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 Dan Tsai, MassHealth
Commissioner Monica Bharel, Department of Public Health
Commissioner Joan Mikula, Department of Mental Health