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ABH Budget Priorities Fiscal Year 2016

Importance of Stability for Community Based Behavioral Health Services

- ABH strongly supports the philosophy of *Community First* – **that whenever possible, individuals should live and be served in community settings.**
- *Community First* focuses on decreasing hospitalizations and maximizing diversion from inpatient care through the use of community-based emergency service programs and alternative levels of care.
- We appreciate the strong commitment the Legislature has made to behavioral health services despite difficult fiscal constraints over the past few budget cycles. Nonetheless, existing community-based behavioral health services are not sufficient to meet the current demand for those services. **The community behavioral healthcare system continues to struggle.**

Department of Mental Health (DMH)

- **Governor Baker’s funding proposal leaves a gap in children’s services at DMH.** We ask the Legislature to restore the Governor’s proposed reductions to DMH Child and Adolescent Services. Additional funding (**approximately \$6.4 million**) is vital to ensuring that children with mental health needs are able to continue to have access to important community-based wrap around services that are typically not funded by insurance companies (**5042-5000: \$86,520,672**).
- **ABH strongly supports the Governor’s proposal to convert the four Emergency Service Programs (ESPs) that are currently state operated in Southeastern Massachusetts.** This proposal would standardize emergency services across the Commonwealth and would save approximately \$2.4 million according to DMH. Provider-operated ESPs provide high quality, effective care in every other region of the state.
- **Fund the Department of Mental Health (DMH) adult community services line item at the level recommend by Governor Baker (5042-0000: \$370 million).** This funding level annualizes the cost of the new community placements created by the Legislature last fiscal year.
- By continuing to support expanding access to community based services, **the Legislature can have a direct impact on the current Emergency Department Boarding Crisis.** These “discharge ready” DMH clients are currently occupying beds that when open, would help to alleviate the log jams that exist throughout the public and private psychiatric in-patient system.

Bureau of Substance Abuse Services

- Fund the Bureau of Substance Abuse Services (BSAS) **line items (4512-0200, 4512-0201, 4512-0202, 4512-0203, 4512-0204, 4512-0210) at the level’s proposed by Governor Baker totaling \$109.7 million.** The Department of Public Health – BSAS has indicated this funding level will preserve all existing BSAS services, including the expansion of services the Legislature invested in during FY’15 to combat the current opioid epidemic.

MassHealth

- Fund MassHealth at the **maintenance level recommended by the Governor**, which preserves existing behavioral health services. Medicaid finances medically necessary behavioral health services for individuals and families, thereby ensuring the stability of some of the most vulnerable individuals in our society.
- Governor Baker has indicated his House 1 recommendations allow the state to **preserve vital behavioral health services**, including diversionary services that treat individuals in the community and divert them from more intense and costly hospital-based settings.

Purchase of Service Reform (Chapter 257)

- **ABH strongly supports the inclusion of the Chapter 257 Rate Reserve fund (1599-6903)** funded at \$30 million. We believe the rate reserve is funded at a level to cover a potential negotiated settlement of *Massachusetts Council of Human Service Providers, Inc., et al. v. Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services*.
- **ABH is concerned though that the Governor's funding recommendation for this account (1599-6903; \$30 million)** is insufficient to cover any new rates scheduled to be set in the upcoming year.