



May 1, 2024

The Honorable L. Louise Lucas
President pro tempore, Senate of Virginia
201 North 9th Street,
Richmond, VA. 23219

Dear Senator Lucas:

We are writing to you as the Chair of the Virginia Alliance of Brain Injury Services Providers and the Executive Director of the Brain Injury Association of Virginia regarding the upcoming special session on May 13, 2024. Two important budget amendments were passed in the bi-partisan approved budget in March that directly impact brain injury services throughout the Commonwealth.

- **Item 314 #1c:** \$775,000 to support the workforce retention of our brain injury service provider network
- **Item 314 #2c:** \$1,875,000 to strengthen and expand the existing state contracted safety net brain injury services system by increasing the numbers of case managers, clubhouse staff, clinical professional staff and/or program support staff and to develop new safety net services in unserved areas of the state

We urge you to continue to fully fund these budget items in the special session. Governor Youngkin proposed reductions to both of these items in his amendments to the budget. Those amendments would undermine the stability of our service system, which serves as a lifeline for thousands of individuals facing the challenges of brain injury, many of whom have co-occurring mental health and substance abuse issues.

Just as Governor Youngkin's *Right Help, Right Now* funding initiatives provided funding for a best-in-class behavioral health workforce and strengthened behavioral health services, our budget amendments seek to fortify our brain injury safety net service system. The brain injury service system exists as it does today because our behavioral health system lacks capacity, expertise, and mandate to serve persons with brain injury, despite the fact that persons with disability resulting from brain injury have many of the same challenges and risks as persons with behavioral health issues.

The workforce retention funding is needed as our service system has seen a nearly 30% attrition rate over the past year and state funded brain injury case managers are paid on average nearly 20% less than similarly qualified Community Service Board case managers. This funding is critical to stabilize and sustain a qualified workforce within our service system around the Commonwealth.

The strengthening and expansion funding is needed to meet the ever-increasing demand for services and lengthening waiting lists, which exceed one year in some areas of the Commonwealth. This funding is also critical as there are still 9 localities in Virginia that lack access to any state designated safety net

services. Investments in community-based services have been repeatedly shown to save the state money as it allows persons to continue to live in the community with appropriate services and supports versus having to be hospitalized, served in more costly institutional settings and contribute to the current overcrowding seen in our state hospital system.

Brain injury remains a large and growing disability population; there are more than 300,000 Virginian's living with disability resulting from a brain injury. We currently have a total of \$7.4M to serve this population within our state-funded service system. Brain injury service providers have successfully leveraged this funding to effectively provide services to thousands of Virginians living with brain injury, and thankfully, with the continued advancement in medical technology and treatments, more persons are surviving brain injuries today. Increased funding is needed for us to address the growing number and complexity of this disability.

These workforce initiatives are needed urgently this year as additional funding for brain injury was also included in last year's House and Senate passed budget, but was eliminated when the full budget was finally passed last fall. This leaves our workforce and our ability to deliver safety net services in a very precarious situation.

As such, we implore you to include both the \$775,000 workforce retention and \$1,875,000 strengthening and expansion funding in the final budget. This money is desperately needed to both sustain and grow our safety net services for persons with brain injury throughout the Commonwealth.

Should you have any questions, we can be reached via e-mail at Jason@communitybraininjury.org and at Linda@biav.net. Thank you so much for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely:

Jason Young, MSW, CBIS
Chair
Virginia Alliance of Brain Injury Services Providers

Linda D. Wilkinson, MC, CFRE
Interim Executive Director
Brain Injury Association of Virginia

CC: The Honorable John Littel, Secretary of Health and Human Resources
The Honorable R. Creigh Deeds, Senate Budget Conferee
The Honorable Mamie E. Locke, Senate Budget Conferee
The Honorable Jennifer B. Boysko, Senate Budget Conferee
The Honorable Ryan T. McDougle, Senate Budget Conferee
The Honorable Todd E. Pillion, Senate Budget Conferee
The Honorable Emily Jordan, Senator 17th District
The Honorable Ghazala Hashmi, Senator 15th District
Kathryn Hayfield, Commissioner, Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services
Mike Tweedy, Senate Finance Committee Staff