



June 29, 2020

The Honorable Daniel Carey
Office of the Secretary of Health and Human Resources
Commonwealth of Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Dr. Carey,

As the Executive Director of the Brain Injury Association of Virginia (BIAV), and the Chair of the Virginia Alliance of Brain Injury Service Providers (VABISP), we are writing to discuss the needs of persons with brain injury and the impact any budget cut will have on the services being provided to them.

The BIAV is the only statewide organization serving the entire continuum of brain injury, regardless of age or level of severity, and our mission demands we provide our input on the planning, coordination, and development of services required to meet the needs of persons with brain injury and their families. The VABISP is a network of state funded agencies providing case management and therapeutic day programs to survivors in 108 cities and counties in the Commonwealth.

The state funded safety net service system for Virginians with brain injury began providing remote services to the more than 9,500 persons we serve immediately following Governor Northam's EO. Some of our clients have already come down with COVID-19, their families are stretched financially and emotionally, and we feel strongly we cannot desert them. Persons with brain injury are at high risk due to chronic health conditions associated with brain injury; many of them are especially vulnerable and require particular attention and care during these difficult times. They have told us the physical, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral disabilities associated with a brain injury are exacerbated by the increased stress associated with daily living during a pandemic. They have needed increased support, assistance with obtaining essential supplies like food and medications, guidance on where and how to seek additional and necessary assistance, and reinforcement of necessary precautions to adjust to the changing parameters of our social behaviors.

Furthermore, some COVID-19 patients have endured significant neurological complications; these include strokes, acute necrotizing encephalopathy, and other pathologies that delay waking from their comas. According to an April 2020 paper in the journal Neurocritical Care. "The magnitude of the covid-19 pandemic will result in substantial neurological disease. The sheer volume of those suffering critical

illness is likely to result in an increased burden of long-term cognitive impairment...which can range from "mental fog," fatigue or mild memory lapses, to severe dysfunction requiring lengthy rehabilitation". Given that only 1 in 5 people ever make their way to an inpatient brain injury rehabilitation program after sustaining a severe brain injury, many will turn to community-based providers to develop the skills needed to return to independent living. We anticipate a significant uptick in the demand for the critical safety net services offered by DARS-contracted community based brain injury service providers.

How the Commonwealth addresses these service and support needs for individuals living with lifelong consequences of TBI is an urgent concern. We grasp the extremely difficult budgetary environment we are entering, and recognize there are going to be budget cuts, but nothing about the needs of those we serve changes in times like these. We would be remiss in our duties if we did not ask that delivery of services to brain injury survivors be a priority for this administration.

Community based brain injury services remain drastically underfunded in comparison to community based services provided by the CSB's; \$19 vs \$58 per person. The first budget that came out of this year's General Assembly session included an additional \$1,000,000 to help us address long-standing capacity and workforce issues. With this new funding already eliminated due to the economic impacts of COVID, any further cuts to our safety net service system for persons with brain injury, would cause a significant and devastating reduction in services for the nearly 300,000 Virginians disabled because of brain injury

Thank you for your service and for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Anne McDonnell, MPA, OTR/L
Executive Director
Brain Injury Association of Virginia



Jason Young, MSW
Chair
Virginia Alliance of Brain Injury Service Providers