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STATE OF VERMONT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HEALTH CARE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

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September 25, 2013

Mark Larson, Commissioner
Department of Vermont Health Access
312 Hurricane Lane, Suite 201
Williston, VT 05495

Al Gobeille, Chair
Green Mountain Care Board
89 Main Street, Third Floor, City Center
Montpelier, VT 05620

Dear Commissioner Larson and Chair Gobeille:

During the Health Care Oversight Committee's September 12 meeting, a diverse group of advocates and organizations expressed concerns to the Committee regarding the integration of substance abuse treatment, mental health services, and long-term care with the rest of health care in the state's payment and delivery system reform efforts. These concerns were voiced in the context of the new Medicaid accountable care organization (ACO) project that the Committee was informed will be the subject of a request for proposals (RFP) within the next couple of weeks. While notice is not a statutory requirement, the Committee would like to be informed in a timely manner of all major steps planned or taken regarding health care reform, including how the payment reform activities will improve access to and the quality of health care for Vermonters. We also want to know how federal funds are being used in Vermont because federal funding such as the SIM grant may affect our health care budgetary decisions.

In addition to interest in the integration and funding issues, the Committee is concerned about the speed with which the Medicaid ACO RFP is being issued and the level of opportunity for interested health care professionals, consumers, and the public to provide input to guide the ACO development process. We were surprised to hear from stakeholders rather than from the Department or the Board about the upcoming issuance of an RFP for the Medicaid ACO. Has the RFP been issued already? If so, we have concerns that it may have been issued before all interested parties—stakeholders, consumers, legislators, and others—had an opportunity to provide input. If it has not yet been issued, we encourage you to consider slowing down the process to allow broader input from all stakeholders, including members of this Committee.

The Committee is enthusiastic about the payment and delivery system reform efforts planned and underway in state government but we want to ensure that the results will meet

the health care needs of all Vermonters. We feel it is important to proceed in a thoughtful manner and not rush through either the planning or the implementation stages. During these critical stages of health care policy change and implementation we believe it is vital that people being served by specific programs be included in their development. And legislators may respond more positively to changes on which they and affected consumers have been able to provide input.

We understand many of these same concerns have already been expressed to you and we are interested in your responses. What are your suggestions for ensuring the inclusion of interested parties in the design and implementation of ACOs and other reforms in Vermont? How can we ensure that legislators are fully informed of payment reform initiatives and federal funding streams when the General Assembly is in and out of session? Do you have other thoughts that you would like to share with the Committee?

We were pleased with the level of inclusion of many people and organizations in the development of Vermont Health Connect and would like to see our vulnerable Medicaid population and their providers and advocates similarly involved in the development of the Medicaid ACO and other payment reforms. We welcome your response to our concerns and look forward to working with you to create an inclusive process for Vermont's health care reform activities going forward.

Sincerely,

Senator Ginny Lyons, Chair

Representative Jill Krowinski, Vice-Chair

cc: Anya Rader Wallack, Arrowhead Health Analytics