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SERVICES

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MEMORANDUM

To: Representative Martha Heath, Chair, House Committee on Appropriations
From: Representative Ann Pugh, Chair, House Committee on Human Services
Cc: Representative Shap Smith, Speaker of the House of Representatives
Date: January 15, 2014
Subject: FY 2014 Budget Adjustment

As requested, the House Committee on Human Services has reviewed the sections of the Administration's FY 2014 Budget Adjustment Act (BAA) proposals related to the Committee's jurisdiction. The Committee appreciates the opportunity to comment on these provisions and has several recommendations.

Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living (DAIL): Choices for Care

The Human Services Committee accepts DAIL's Choices for Care reinvestment proposals, which would use \$3 million in FY 2013 savings to decrease or eliminate the Moderate Needs Group waiting list and increase Moderate Needs Group flexibility and would also invest in nutrition and housing programs. The Committee also accepts DAIL's proposal to set aside \$2 million in Choices for Care savings in BAA. The Committee understands that spending in the Choices for Care program can vary greatly from month to month and wants to ensure that the State does not spend all of the savings now only to implement a waiting list for the High Needs group in the future if the program experiences higher expenditures. The Committee suggests that these funds may need to be allocated as FY 2014 budget adjustment provisions in the FY 2015 budget bill, either to address fiscal pressures in the Choices for Care program if a High Needs waiting list appears imminent or to reinvest in additional home- and community-based services if FY 2014 savings in the program continue.

DAIL: Developmental Disability Services

The Human Services Committee does not object to the BAA proposal for developmental disability services. The Committee will not make any policy recommendations at this time but is concerned about the extent to which the General Assembly delegates its policymaking regarding developmental disability services to DAIL. The Committee looks forward to addressing the issue of developmental disability services this legislative session because the Committee remains

concerned about the hundreds of Vermonters with disabilities who experienced a reduction in services as the result of rescissions in the current fiscal year.

Department for Children and Families (DCF): General Assistance and Temporary Housing

The Human Services Committee accepts DCF's proposals regarding General Assistance and temporary housing as an interim solution. In addition, the Committee recommends that a House work group be established consisting of members of the relevant committees, including representatives from the House Committees on Human Services, on Appropriations, on General, Housing, and Military Affairs, on Commerce, on Judiciary, and on Institutions, to develop coordinated solutions to housing problems that transcend the jurisdiction of any one committee. This work group should develop immediate and long-term solutions to the issue of housing vulnerable populations and identify strategies for reducing the need for emergency housing across the State.

Department of Health: Opioid Antagonist Distribution Pilot Program

The Human Services Committee supports the Administration's proposed language specifying that distribution of an opioid antagonist is an approved use of the pharmaceutical manufacturer fee and of funds from the Evidence-Based Education and Advertising Fund. The Committee sees this change as a technical correction and agrees with the Chairs of the Appropriations Committees that this use of the funds was the intent of the General Assembly.

Department of Health: Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs (ADAP)

The Human Services Committee supports the new \$175,000.00 proposed for the Vermont Recovery Network. The Committee understands that additional funds have been identified from other areas and proposed for use in reducing waiting lists for medication assisted treatment, and the Committee supports this proposal as well. In making recommendations for the FY 2015 budget, the committees of jurisdiction should also review the effectiveness of existing prevention and intervention programs.

Department of Mental Health (DMH): Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital (VPCH)

The Human Services Committee is concerned that the DMH is booking so-called "savings" from the delayed opening of the VPCH in its BAA proposal. Many of the individuals who would otherwise receive care at the VPCH still need services, some of which will be provided at the Green Mountain Psychiatric Care Center in Morrisville, which will remain in operation longer than anticipated because of the VPCH's lack of readiness. Money that will not be used to operate the VPCH in FY 2014 should be used to provide care for these individuals. The Committee does not want to see "savings" booked again in the FY15 budget for the VPCH's delayed opening. The Committee is eager to see DMH move as expeditiously as possible to adhere to the timeline presented to the Committee and serve 25 patients in the new facility, but also wants to ensure that staff will receive thorough and appropriate training.

The DMH BAA proposal includes almost \$1 million for sheriffs to watch persons under emergency examination applications in hospital emergency rooms. While the Committee understands the necessity of this adjustment on an interim basis, the Committee is interested in development of a new systemic response to the need to supervise individuals with mental health needs in hospital emergency rooms that does not involve sheriffs and that provides proper

supervision at a more reasonable cost. The Committee urges DMH and the hospitals to explore whether there are more appropriate ways in the future to manage patients in emergency rooms.