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OFFICE OF THE HEALTH CARE ADVOCATE

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Office of the Health Care Advocate

2020 funding increase request for cost of living and additional attorney position.

Total Increase Request: \$205,000

1. The HCA requests \$85,000 to return to SFY 2016 funding levels.

The Office of the Health Care Advocate (HCA) is a steady and strong voice for Vermonters' access to high quality and affordable health care. We provide critical help to individuals navigating the health care system and represent all Vermonters in health care policy and regulation.

This will be the fourth year of level funding for the HCA. During this period, the cost of living has risen by almost 5% and the cost of our health care benefits has increased by more than 25%.

2. The HCA requests \$120,000 to fund a new attorney position to respond to expanding responsibilities (ACO budget review, federal threats to health care, affordability).

The HCA policy team is a small dedicated group that stretches to fulfill its obligation to advocate for the public. We represent the interests of all Vermonters in health insurance rate review cases, hospital budget reviews, and accountable care organization (ACO) budget reviews (a new regulatory process and additional responsibility for the HCA). We also advocate on behalf of Vermonters at the legislature and respond to less predictable issues such as certificate of need (CON) applications, proposed state and federal rules, and systemic issues identified through our individual advocacy and community partners.

The federal administration's efforts to dismantle the Affordable Care Act have threatened Vermonters' access to care. This has placed a significant burden on Vermont consumers, policy makers, and the HCA. Ensuring that Vermont reacts quickly and effectively to federal changes is essential to maintaining Vermonters access to care. The HCA will continue to advocate for Vermonters as these threats continue into the future.

Finally, as the cost of health care continues to outpace Vermonters' wages, the HCA's work on behalf of families who cannot afford the care they need is increasingly important.

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