

## 2025 Policy and Legislative Priorities

### 1. Increase Access to Community Based Mental Health Care

All Virginians deserve access to community-based care that is person-centered, trauma-informed, evidence-based, timely, affordable, and reduces involuntary commitments to psychiatric hospitals.

- A. Support full implementation of the **Right Help, Right Now comprehensive behavioral health crisis system**.
  - Increase funding for Mobile Crisis Teams, Crisis Receiving Centers, and a full continuum of community services in addition to immediate treatment in hospital emergency departments.
- B. **Invest the necessary resources in community care and supportive housing** to reduce the reliance on hospital care and eliminate the Extraordinary Barriers to Discharge List.
- C. **Lower prescription costs for patients** by addressing out of pocket costs, and Pharmacy Benefit Manger (PBM) rebate reform for Virginians living with chronic conditions.
- D. **Grow a diverse mental health work force** through more loan forgiveness and other incentives to improve Virginia's ranking of 38<sup>th</sup> in access to a mental health provider.

### 2. Decriminalize Mental Illness and Address the Needs of People with Mental Health Challenges in the Criminal Justice System

Many Virginians who need mental health services are instead arrested and incarcerated. All localities should screen for diversion at the earliest stage of the criminal justice process. For those who are confined, services must be timely, professional and based on individual needs.

- A. Provide **alternatives to arrest and felony assault charges** when law enforcement responds to someone in a mental health crisis.
- B. Support state wide implementation of a **comprehensive behavioral health crisis system**, with interventions shown to reduce interactions with the criminal justice system.
- C. Support **mental health dockets** in every jurisdiction for defendants with a mental illness.
- D. Support additional oversight and support for services in local and regional jails to ensure they can meet **minimum standards for behavioral health care**.
- E. **Support funding for discharge planners to serve every local and regional jail.**

### 3. Endorse Effective Strategies for Reducing Suicide

- A. Implement the "Red Flag" law consistently across Virginia through education and training to restrict access to lethal means for those at risk of harm to self or others.

### 4. Prioritize youth mental health education, prevention, treatment and recovery services

- A. Support increased mental health education and resources in schools, training and support for school personnel, and school-based prevention and treatment services.
- B. Streamline care coordination for youth to include residential services.