

Testimony of Suzette Kern, Chairman
Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board
Before the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees
of the Virginia General Assembly
January 3, 2018

Good morning. I am Suzette Kern, chairman of the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board. We are the largest CSB in Virginia, serving a population of over 1.1 million people in Fairfax County and the cities of Fairfax and Falls Church.

Our three most pressing concerns this year are these:

First: We need **full state funding to implement “STEP – VA”**, the transformation plan for the Commonwealth’s behavioral health system.

STEP-VA requires that by July 1, **2019**, all CSBs provide **same-day access to mental health screening services**. Also by that date, CSBs must provide **primary healthcare screening and follow-up** for people who need help accessing services.

Then, by July 1, **2021**, CSBs are mandated to provide more services, including crisis and outpatient, case management, peer and family support, and more.

We support these goals, and we provide some of these services already. But for us to **fully** implement STEP-VA, we must have sufficient state funding, commensurate with the size of the population we serve. Otherwise, we will have to cut back in other areas that are just as critical, but not mandated.

Second: We need state funding to fight the **opioid epidemic**.

Fairfax County police reported **six overdose-related deaths in just one week** in December 2017 – five of the six deaths involved opioids. In 2016, opioid overdose claimed the lives of more than 1,100 Virginians – and more than 100 of those deaths were in Fairfax County.

As fatalities increase, demand for CSB services continues to grow. We provide some interim support for people as they wait for services to become available.

But **substance use disorder is a life-threatening condition**. For some people, the wait is insupportable.

CSBs are on the front lines, saving lives. We need more money for detoxification, medication-assisted treatment and other services to fight this terrible epidemic.

Third: **We need more funding for community-based services for people with developmental disabilities**. We need housing and support options, especially in Fairfax County where real estate and service delivery costs are high, and Medicaid waiver reimbursement rates are insufficient. More than 2,000 Fairfax County residents are waiting for Medicaid waivers.

More state funding is essential to create a truly viable community-based service system for Virginians with developmental disabilities.

My handouts provide more information. Thank you for your support.