



# VIRGINIA BRAIN INJURY COUNCIL

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May 9, 2025

Kathryn A. Hayfield, Commissioner  
Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services  
8004 Franklin Farms Drive  
Henrico, Virginia 23229

RE: Virginia Brain Injury Council's Priorities for FY 2026

Dear Commissioner Hayfield:

On behalf of the Virginia Brain Injury Council, I respectfully submit the Council's FY 2026 Priorities Letter. These recommendations were determined from a variety of sources, including areas identified by members of the 2025 Priorities Committee, a review of past Priorities Letters, last year's Virginia Brain Injury Council Priorities survey, comments from other Council members, and their understanding of unmet need within the State. These priorities will drive the Council's work and focus over the next fiscal year. They serve as our recommendations to DARS, the lead state agency for brain injury in Virginia.

**1. Continued expansion and strengthening of Commonwealth's statewide network of community-based brain injury services**

The need to strengthen community-based services across the Commonwealth remains a challenge, ensuring that services based on the unique needs of individuals living with brain injury remains our focus. Over the past year, there have been significant achievements as the nine statewide brain injury providers expanded their reach across the Commonwealth. Additionally, Medicaid Targeted Case management was introduced to address the complex needs of a specific population of individuals living with brain injury.

Despite our accomplishments, there is more to be done. Outreach is critical to ensure that individuals are aware of all services across the Commonwealth. Ensuring that person-centered services are available regardless of where an individual may reside in the Commonwealth is paramount. Despite ongoing efforts to expand service access for individuals living with brain injuries and their families, more work is needed to ensure that the over **10,000** people identified through the registry each year have the full range of available services. We are pleased that recent budget allocations have allowed for flexibility in expanding essential community-based services. However, additional funding is necessary to fully meet the needs across the state. We recommend that DARS include additional funding to strengthen our community-based service system in its agency FY 27 funding request.

**2. Increased access and funding for Neurobehavioral Services for people living with brain injury.**

The need for Neurobehavioral Services for people living with brain injury has remained a focus for many years. The new 20-person in-patient neurobehavioral unit recently approved by the General Assembly is a step in a positive direction. The lack of in-state intensive neurobehavioral options continues to result in persons being sent out of state for services, being served in a variety of inappropriate placements (state hospital systems, nursing homes, correctional/jail/prison systems) or receiving no services at all. The need for intensive neurobehavioral services remains significant, along with appropriate step-down/transitional services to allow individuals to return to community living. We recommend that members of DARS continue to advocate for the development of waiver services that fit best within our existing service structure. A 1115 demonstration waiver solely focused on providing residential supports to persons with brain injury would provide a cost and time efficient approach to addressing the Commonwealth's lack of appropriate neurobehavioral care. This type of waiver would work collaboratively with our current state funded system of care for these more intensive cases.

Lastly, we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge and thank DARS for achieving a significant milestone in Virginia this past year. For the first time in our history, Virginia has achieved statewide coverage for our safety net services system. This has been a long-standing priority of the Virginia Brain Injury Council. Our success this past year is a testament to DARS' leadership in elevating profile of brain injury across the Commonwealth.

Council members appreciate your willingness to consider these recommendations and would like to invite you to their next meeting on Wednesday, July 23, 2025 to discuss your reaction to these priorities and our plans moving forward to make them a reality. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kara Keuthan". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Kara Keuthan, Chair  
Virginia Brain Injury Council

Cc: Amy Loving, Director, Brain Injury Services