



4 September 2021

Council,

On behalf of the nearly 500 Police Officers and Detectives represented by **the Virginia Beach Police Benevolent Association**, I would like to add our support to Councilman Michael Berlucchi's proposal of providing a grant to the Hampton Roads Workforce Council to address the *sever* need of recruiting and retaining mental health care providers.

As a graduate of the second C.I.T. class held by the Virginia Beach Police Department, a C.I.T. instructor, and having spent a decade working in the zone that covers both Virginia Beach General Hospital and Virginia Beach Psychiatric Center I can personally attest to this long overdue need. I assure you, all our officers do as well.

Each Virginia Beach Police Officer is dedicated to providing the client in crisis the best service possible. Each officer is dedicated to helping the client's loved ones navigate through the often complicated mental health system during this very stressful time with the hope of putting them at ease. There is nothing more frustrating for everyone involved, including the officers and the mental health workers, to watch a person in crisis who must wait for critical services because of a lack of caregivers. Over the years you have asked our Police Officers to assume a greater role in the arena of mental health. We have assumed this roll and excelled at it. We truly are the First Responders of metal health. But the additional responsibility does not come without added burden.

You owe it to everyone involved, the client, their loved ones, the mental health workers, the emergency room doctors and nurses, and our police officers, to ensure that we are providing the best service possible. This starts with you, our council, providing the resources needed to get the job done.

Brian Luciano

President, VBPBA#34