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### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

TO: State Special Education Advisory Committee

FROM: VBPD Board

AT: January 2007 meeting

RE: Recommendations on provision of information regarding long term care and support services to children with disabilities

At its December 14, 2006 Board meeting, the Board engaged upon a discussion regarding access to Home and Community Based waiver and other support services to persons with disabilities. It was agreed that the population of students in transition and their families should be a primary target for receiving information about services that may be available to them during and following their school years.

While many school divisions do an excellent job of inviting and including representatives of other agencies to IEP transition meetings, other school divisions may not have the resources or the knowledge to ensure that families are aware of services for which the student may be eligible. This becomes particularly important when the student exits school and no longer has those services available to him or her.

Home and Community based waivers provide valuable life long supports to persons with significant disabilities who meet eligibility criteria. While certain waivers (EDCD, Tech, AIDS) do not have waiting lists for services, the Developmental Disabilities (DD) waiver and the Mental Retardation (MR) waivers have significant waiting lists. In order to live successfully in the community, it is critical for individuals who require the supports offered through these waivers to apply for services and to obtain a place on the waiting list. Although it can be frustrating to be on a waiting list, not obtaining a place on the list means the individual will never have access to services they may need and, should availability of services be expanded, access to those services typically is first extended to those on the waiting list. In addition, if the individual is not on a waiting list, his or her need for services will not be documented and thus policymakers, who are making policy, programmatic and funding decisions will be unaware of those individuals who have an undocumented need. This will result in decisions that are not based on accurate data and ultimately result in less service availability.

*Providing a VOICE for Virginians with Disabilities*

Because of its role as the Advisory Committee to the Board of Education, its contacts in the education community, and its potential influence with Local Education Advisory Councils, the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities asks that the SSEAC consider recommending to the Board of Education that local school divisions, through Parent Resource Centers, PTAs, Local Education Advisory Councils and the IEP process, especially during critical transition planning, provide students and families with information on disability services and supports for which they may be eligible now or in the future, with a particular focus on Home and Community Based Medicaid Waivers. This will greatly assist families in obtaining needed services and will facilitate the transition process, particularly for students with severe disabilities. Several years ago, the Virginia Board funded the Medicaid Waiver Technical Assistance Center (TAC) at the Endependence Center in Virginia Beach. This Center is still operating and can provide materials on Home and Community Based Waivers that could be provided to and duplicated by school division for families. In addition, school divisions can provide families with the toll free number so that they can obtain additional information from the TAC. The toll free # is 1-866-323-1088. Materials can also be obtained from the Department of Medical Assistance Services which manages six of the seven Medicaid Waivers.

Thank you for your consideration of this comment.