2021 Budget Hearing Speaker’s Guide
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Public Hearing Notice

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6, 2021
(Hearings begin at 10:00 a.m.)

Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic and the Governor’s declared state of emergency, in order to comply with public health guidelines, all public hearings will be held virtually. There will be four separate virtual hearings with legislators from each region participating as follows:

Northern Virginia  Western Virginia  Hampton Roads  Central Virginia

Public Hearings will be livestreamed on the Virginia General Assembly Website https://virginiageneralassembly.gov/membersAndSession.php?secid=1&activesec=0#hb=1&mainContentTabs=0

Registering for Budget Hearings:
The purpose of the hearings is to receive comments on the Governor’s proposed amendments to the 2020-22 biennial state budget. Those persons wishing to speak may register to speak the day before each virtual hearing.

Speakers will be taken in the order of registration. Each person may register only one speaker at a time and only sign-up to speak at one of the hearings. Speakers are asked to limit their comments to three minutes or less. Speakers representing groups and organizations should consolidate remarks to reduce duplication.

Public registration to speak at the virtual public hearings will occur on Tuesday, January 5, 2021. Please check either of the following websites for more information:

- Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee Website (sfac.virginia.gov)
- House Appropriations Committee Website (hac.virginia.gov)

Those unable to attend the public hearings virtually may submit their comments electronically at https://hodspeak.house.virginia.gov/upcoming_meetings

People with disabilities may request reasonable accommodations by calling (804) 698-7480. All requests for reasonable accommodations must be received by 5:00 p.m., Monday, December 28, 2020. Requested arrangements for sign language interpreters, received by December 28th, will be provided via video format.
Budget Hearing Sign-Up Tips and Logistics

1. Due to COVID-19, 2021 Budget Hearings will be held virtually. There will be four separate hearings happening at the same time.

2. Sign up to speak the day before the hearings and you will need to sign up for the hearing in your region in the state.

3. The earlier you sign up, the earlier your name will be called to speak. Speakers are taken in the order of registration. Each person may register only one speaker at a time and only sign-up to speak at one hearing.

4. Comments are limited to 3 minutes per person. At the hearing you will be timed. Do not go over three minutes or you will be cut off.

5. Based on the start time of the hearing, it is possible to estimate what time the person will be speaking. For example, if the hearing starts at 10:00 AM and the person is the tenth speaker in line, you can estimate a speaking time of approximately 10:30 AM since each person is given 3 minutes to speak.

6. The deadline to request accommodations for disabilities or interpreters is December 28, 2020.

7. Practice. Read your statement beforehand. Is it under 3 minutes?

8. Remember to be respectful. Do not yell, raise your voice, lecture or threaten.

9. Dress should be neat and clean. Make sure you are in a quiet environment with neutral background.

Remember, you are speaking on behalf of yourself/your loved one, not on behalf of NAMI Virginia.
Dear Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is __________ and I live in (city/county).

**Personalize so that the audience knows your perspective. Example:** I am the mother of a son who lives with bipolar disorder/parent of an adolescent who has a mental health condition/person who has experienced mental illness/sister of a person who has schizophrenia, etc.

I am here today to ask for your support in strengthening Virginia’s mental health system.

I/my family has experienced.... *(share one or two sentences about what you/your family has experienced in trying to get the mental health care you need...in the interest of time, keep it brief)*.

**Give one or two sentences about what has helped you/your loved one. In the interest of time, keep it brief. Example:** We were assigned a case manager who could navigate the system and link us up to services. Or, we were able to access crisis services immediately, which diffused the mental health crisis and helped avoid a hospitalization.
Give one or two sentences about what was lacking that you/your loved one needed. In the interest of time, keep it brief. Example: even when he/she was in the throes of crisis we were told that there was a long waiting list. Or, even though he/she had decompensated we were not able to locate a hospital bed in a timely manner.

I have been encouraged by the recent investments in mental health services, and I thank you for the work you have done on that. Virginia’s mental health care system needs sustained, long-term support.

This is what I support from the Governor’s proposed budget:

1. Additional administrative support funding of Marcus Alert legislation. These funds will be used to maintain the crisis hotline, evaluate current crisis system capacity in localities, and contract for a public advertising campaign.
2. Restore administrative costs for the implementation of the System Transformation, Excellence and Performance in Virginia (STEP VA) program.
3. Provide funds to train the workforce development to support an enhanced Behavioral Health care system.
4. Increase the availability of discharge assistance plans (DAP) funding for those individuals moving from state-operated mental health facilities to community placements.

This is what is missing from the budget and needs to be included:

1. We need to expand the availability of outpatient mental health services, permanent supportive housing, and Peer Recovery Specialists and Family Support Partners in our state. I am hopeful that the General Assembly will expand these services to meet mental health needs in Virginia.

We need your help to protect mental health services and to preserve the hope of recovery. Will you support mental health today, and not to put it off until another tragedy strikes?

Again, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.
Preparing a Budget Hearing Statement

The following six steps will help you craft your story in a succinct and powerful way. Each step includes examples. Make sure you include each step, but put things in your own words. And remember – each speaker will have only 3 minutes, so be brief!

1. **Introduce yourself and greet/thank the committee.**
   - Share your full name and city/county/town. This helps your audience connect with you. *Example: my name is Sharon Johnson and I am from Anytown, Virginia.*
   - Let your audience know how you are affected by mental illness. This gives a “real face” to mental illness and prepares your audience to empathize with your story. *Example: I am the mother of a son who lives with bipolar disorder.*
   - Let your audience know why you are speaking or writing. Let your audience know what you want them to support (or oppose). *Example: I am here to share my son’s story and to ask for your support in preserving mental health services.*

2. **What happened before you received the help you needed?**
   - Keep this very brief – think about the main highlights that you could share in 30 seconds. *Example: Our family was in a state of panic and chaos for years. Andy went in and out of the hospital. He tried dozens of medications, and was even arrested once for being a public nuisance.*

3. **What helped?**
   - Describe what has helped you/your loved one. *Example: It took months to get him into stable, supportive housing with access to case management and psychosocial services.*

4. **How are you different today?**
   - Share with is going right in your life, or how you are experiencing recovery. *Example: Today Andy attends a peer support group at the local community services board, and was recently placed in a part-time job through the Department of Rehabilitative Services which enabled him to socialize and earn money for himself. He is working hard on his recovery and makes us all proud.*
5. **Talk about mental illness or mental health care and the hope of recovery.**

   - This is a transition from your personal story to a message for your audience. *Example: Andy’s challenge is more common than one might think: one in seventeen adults lives with a serious mental illness like bipolar disorder, major depression, or schizophrenia.*

6. **Make your ask.**

   - Let your audience know how they can help. Say thank you. *Example: We need your help to protect mental health services and to preserve the hope of recovery. Thank you.*