Caldwell County
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April 1, 2024

Secretary Kody H. Kinsley
N.C. Department of Health and Human Services
2001 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-2000

Dear Secretary Kinsley:

As County Commissioners in Caldwell County, we recognize that caring for children and youth in foster care is one of the most important functions of government. As such, we applaud the Department's increased resources and attention for this population reflected in the NCDHHS Children and Families Specialty Plan (CFSP) waiver Request for Proposals (RFP).

I am writing to extend Caldwell County's support for Vaya Health to become the statewide administrator for the CFSP, in collaboration with Partners Health Management.

Vaya is highly qualified to administer a specialty plan for children and families served by the child welfare system. For more than 50 years, Vaya has been a trusted partner in the State's public behavioral health system. Vaya's service to the State includes more than 12 years of experience administering a Medicaid health plan covering a full array of mental health, substance use disorder, and intellectual/ developmental disability (I/DD) services. In the coming months, Vaya will begin operating the Behavioral Health and I/DD Tailored Plan that includes physical health, pharmacy services and behavioral health services for its members. Vaya currently operates in nearly one-third of the state's 100 counties, understands the needs of our community, and is invested in the well-being of North Carolinians.

Vaya's expertise and experience will offer the best support for the complex needs of the population to be served by the CFSP. CFSP members will depend on plan services for supporting and maintaining family systems, preventing entry into foster care, and ensuring permanency when foster care placements are necessary. These efforts will require close coordination with local Departments of Social Services (DSS). Many years ago, Vaya pioneered on-site, embedded care management, growing the concept to include almost all counties it serves. Embedding staff in county social service agencies ensures DSS-involved youth and their families receive timely, appropriate support and services. Vaya has fostered these partnerships through regular meetings with county social service agencies, state child welfare leadership, and its peer LME/MCOs to discuss successes, challenges, and solution-oriented opportunities for collaboration.

One notable example of Vaya's continual investment in North Carolina's child welfare system, provider agencies, and involved children and families is the Pathways to Permanency project. Launched in March 2021, the project is an ongoing partnership among Vaya, local DSS agencies, providers, and a lived experience advisory council. Resources created through this project include a pathway for assessing the clinical needs of children entering custody, cross-systems training, and the "Adventure Awaits" foster care recruitment campaign.

Vaya's committed and long-serving executive leadership team has successfully administered services and support on behalf of the people of North Carolina while maintaining quality standards and fiscal responsibility. Vaya staff have achieved this success via dedication to members and recipients and extensive state and local partnerships with government agencies, individuals and families, health care providers, and community-based organizations. By adhering to best practices and implementing innovative programs to address service gaps, Vaya meets individual and community needs and offers wraparound services and support to help them live lives that are meaningful to them.

Awarding the CFSP to Vaya will allow North Carolina to build on the solid foundation that counties have built through

LME/MCOs—a legacy of stable, personalized care available through dedicated local providers who are deeply rooted in the communities they serve. Expanding Vaya's work statewide will utilize those established foundations in the 47 counties currently served by Vaya and Partners, retaining the local focus and community voice we hold dear, while allowing the state's other counties to benefit from that proven model.

Sincerely,

Randy T. Church, Chairman

Mike LaBrose, Vice Chairman

Jeff Branch, Commissioner

Donnie Potter, Commissioner

Robbie Wilkie, Commissioner