



**United Way
of the National Capital Area**

January 30, 2023

Delegate Sam Rasoul
Virginia House of Delegates, 11th District
P.O. Box 13842
Roanoke, Virginia 24037

Dear Delegate Rasoul,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of United Way of the National Capital Area, I am writing to express our support for HB2192, with the goal of transforming Catawba Hospital into a state-of-the-art facility addressing the full spectrum of substance use disorder treatment, recovery services, and behavioral health services necessary to meet the growing need in the region and across the Commonwealth.

Just recently, the Roanoke Valley Collective Response completed Building on Hope, a white paper that analyzed the impact of COVID-19 on the opioid addiction crisis in the Roanoke Valley. The report notes an overall increase of 30% in overdose rates nationwide, a 9% increase in adults reporting issues with depression or anxiety in 2021 over 2018 as identified in Carilion Clinic's Community Health Survey, and a sharp increase in compassion fatigue experienced by the region's caregivers and public safety staff, just to list a few of the many impacts.

Addiction, substance abuse disorders, and mental illness are often among the most significant barriers to housing and employment – which are key to attaining financial stability. Issues that were evident prior to the COVID-19 pandemic have only been exacerbated – leaving many seeking mental health supports as they navigate the new normal. A reinvigorated and well-resourced Catawba Hospital would be a vital tool in meeting the growing need for mental health services and facilitate access to others and would undoubtedly be a resource for many across the region.

Our United Way is fully supportive of HB2192. We value our partnership, and to the extent we are able, will make ourselves available to participate in the next steps in the process in anticipation of the results of this important and timely work.

Thank you for your leadership in this area of need.

Sincerely,

Rosie Allen-Herring
President & Chief Executive Officer