



Florida Behavioral Health Association

Inform. Innovate. Influence.

For Immediate Release

June 9, 2022

Contact: Mary Katherine Delegal

marykatherine@floridabha.org

(850) 566-8065

The Florida Behavioral Health Association President and CEO Wins National Award

Tallahassee, Fla./Washington, D.C. – The Florida Behavioral Health Association (FBHA) President and CEO, Melanie Brown-Woofter, has been awarded the Award for Individual Achievement in Advocacy from the National Council for Mental Wellbeing (National Council) during [Hill Day at Home](#), the organization’s annual advocacy event that promotes bipartisan solutions for mental health and substance providers and patients.

The National Council’s 2022 Advocacy Leadership Awards recognize individuals and organizations that have led legislative or regulatory advocacy and public policy efforts to expand access to services and support for people with mental health and/or substance use challenges.

“I am incredibly honored to receive this award from National Council,” said Brown-Woofter. “However, none of this would be possible without the tireless effort, experience and expertise of the entire FBHA staff. This is a true group award that I am proudly accepting on behalf of Florida’s community mental health and substance use providers who tirelessly work to help Floridians in need.”

“Whether it has been her serving as the chair of the National Council’s Policy Committee or helping to secure unprecedented funding for Florida’s community mental health and substance use system, Melanie has exemplified tremendous success throughout this year and her entire career,” said National Council President and CEO, Chuck Ingoglia. “I am so happy that she is being recognized on a national level for her dedication, advocacy and hard work.”

Under Melanie’s leadership, the FBHA took on a bold initiative to inform policymakers of the growing crisis for care and advocate for increased funding and important policy changes during Florida’s 2022 legislative session. As a result, the Florida legislature passed two priority bills that address stigma, streamline medical decisions made by providers and alleviate workforce shortages. In addition, the legislature committed an additional \$126 million in recurring funds to expand care for community mental health and substance abuse, a dramatic action that has not happened in the past 20 years.

Melissa Larkin-Skinner, CEO of Centerstone in Florida and the board chair of FBHA, added to this sentiment. “I have witnessed firsthand Melanie’s advocacy efforts and their positive impact on Florida’s mental health and substance use policies and funding. Under her guidance and leadership, community

mental health and substance use providers received \$126 million to the base budget this past legislative session. This is unprecedented and would not have been possible without Melanie's knowledge, perseverance and advocacy."

"She has a strong moral compass, possesses high-level policy knowledge and continually challenges herself and those around her to improve the mental health and substance use treatment system," Larkin-Skinner added.

###

The Florida Behavioral Health Association is a non-profit organization that provides statewide leadership on behavioral health policy and practice. FBHA supports member agencies offering services to those in need of mental health and substance use disorder assistance and support. Its members include a broad range of provider types, ranging from small specialty organizations to comprehensive treatment organizations with multiple locations within a geographic region. For more information, please visit www.floridabha.org