



November 10, 2019

RECEIVED

Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board  
525 West Jefferson Street  
Springfield, Illinois 62761

NOV 15 2019

RE: Certificate of Need Application for CGH Medical Center **HEALTH FACILITIES & SERVICES REVIEW BOARD**

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing in support of CGH Medical Center's Certificate of Need to open a behavioral health unit.

As the Director of CGH Ambulance Services, I know first-hand the critically unmet need for inpatient psychiatric services in Whiteside County. Our EMS professionals are here to serve our community by providing expert care for individuals who are experiencing strokes, heart attacks, trauma, and life-threatening injuries.

Each day, our EMS team works with residents struggling with mental health disorders. Many of them are known to our community and simply lack access, transportation, or the means to maintain stability. Because CGH lacks a dedicated behavioral health unit, these residents are subsequently transferred out. Due to the inconsistent availability of timely transport from Downstate Transport, our EMS is regularly requested to provide transfer services.

In the past two years, 341 nonemergent transports for inpatient behavioral health services were completed by our ambulance service. Of those transports, 43% were to facilities in the Chicagoland region. These transports take approximately 5 hrs. to complete. There is little to no reimbursement for these transports. As our service is funded by the County, this costs taxpayers \$359,142 per year.

It is also important to consider the cost to the community when an EMS team is utilized for one of these transports. Another crew must be called in to cover for actual emergency response. This simply adds to the cost burden and burnout of the crew.

Please help our community and approve the application to open a behavioral health unit at CGH Medical Center. Providing these services within our community would improve the lives of the residents we serve and the teams who are dedicated to providing care.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Venema'.

Ryan Venema, EMT-P  
Director of CGH Ambulance Services