



Dr. Sharon Desmoulin-Kherat
Superintendent

May 26, 2022

Chairwoman Debra Savage and Members
Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board
525 West Jefferson Street, Second Floor
Springfield, Illinois 62761

Re: Project No. [22-017] – Letter of Support
Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health Campus

Dear Chairwoman Savage and Members:

This letter is submitted in support of the proposed child and adolescent behavioral health campus in Peoria.

As Superintendent of Peoria Public Schools, I understand firsthand the need for additional mental health services for kids.

Last year a collaborative with UnityPoint Health – Methodist and several other community organizations and providers was formed to effectively address and meet the behavioral health needs of children, adolescents, and their families in Central Illinois. While there are many health care needs, behavioral health care is one of great concerns of residents in our region. The objective of the collaborative — the Youth and Family Behavioral Health Collaborative — is to improve access to, and the delivery of, child and adolescent behavioral health, mental health, and substance abuse treatment services through the establishment of transformative treatment facilities and programs. Our collaborative determined that to achieve this objective, we needed to transform the current care delivery model into a hub-and-spoke model designed to increase access to child and adolescent behavioral health care across the continuum and implement outreach services and educational programs to improve health literacy.

At the core of the collaborative's transformational plan is the establishment of UnityPoint Health – Methodist's proposed state-of-the art child and adolescent behavioral health campus. UnityPoint Health – Methodist is the only hospital in Central Illinois that provides child and adolescent inpatient behavioral health services. Over the last five years, however, UnityPoint Health – Methodist had to turn away more than 2,500 children and adolescents requiring inpatient

behavioral health treatment due to insufficient capacity and resources at its existing facility. We do not have another local option for child and adolescent inpatient behavioral health treatment, so when UnityPoint Health – Methodist is at capacity and/or unable to immediately provide inpatient care for these patients, they are forced to travel hours away to receive services in an unfamiliar place away from their families. We have also encountered families and children in crisis who are simply overwhelmed by “the system” and who have struggled to find the time, resources, and strength to pursue the services needed to help their children heal, grow, and succeed.

The proposed campus would provide greatly needed inpatient and outpatient mental health, behavioral health, and substance abuse treatment, therapies, and resources for children and families in one welcoming, convenient, and central location at an affordable cost (i.e., offering Medicaid-eligible services and services at no- or low-cost). The proposed campus will break down barriers to care and increase access to high-quality, culturally competent care close to home for youth in our community who need it most.

I am excited about this much needed service, and I urge your approval of this innovative project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sharon Desmoulin-Kherat".

Dr. Sharon Desmoulin-Kherat
Peoria Public Schools
Superintendent