



**Office of the Regional Dean**

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**Meenakshy Aiyer, M.D., MACP**  
Regional Dean

June 15, 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. University of Illinois College of Medicine Peoria (UICOMP) is one of the regional campuses of the University of Illinois College of Medicine and is part of the a 900-part bed hospital district containing two major teaching hospital systems as well as the medical school. UICOMP's educational programs includes 260 medical students and over 300 residents/fellows in 21 different residency and fellowship programs. Unity Point Health Methodist has been and is one of our major clinical teaching healthcare affiliate and is the primary teaching site for the Psychiatry and Family and Community Medicine residency programs. In its task of training future physicians as well as employing faculty who provide clinical care, educate the next generation of physicians, perform outstanding research and scholarship (includes NIH and NSF funded research) UICOMP plays a significant role in the Central Illinois Economy.

In 2020, UICOMP led the formation of a healthcare collaborative with Unity Point Health – Methodist and several other community organizations and providers to effectively address and meet health disparities in our community including addressing the behavioral health needs of children, adolescents, and their families in the Peoria region. While there are many health care needs in Peoria and the surrounding counties, behavioral health care is one of great concern of residents in our region. The Youth and Family Behavioral Health Collaborative was then established 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, programs and clinical delivery models. Recognizing the inherent challenges to behavior health care to, proposal was made 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, implement outreach services, and provide health literacy programs.

A key component of the Youth and Family Behavioral Health collaborative's 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 our region 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 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. 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.

We are incredibly excited about our continued partnership and collaboration with UnityPoint Health – Methodist to truly transform care in our community, and we urge your approval of this innovative project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Meenakshy Aiyer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Meenakshy" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Aiyer".

Meenakshy Aiyer, MD, MACP  
Regional Dean  
University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria