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June 28, 2022

Chairwoman Debra Savage  
Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board  
525 West Jefferson Street, 2nd Floor  
Springfield, Illinois 62761

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

Dear Chairwoman Savage and Members:

As the CEO of Phoenix Community Development Services, a licensed mental health provider specializing in persons with mental illness who are experiencing homelessness, and the parent of three children with mental health conditions, I am writing in support of Project 22-017. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) 2020 annual report on its Homeless Assistance Programs Homeless Populations and Subpopulations indicate that 25% of persons experiencing homelessness are under the age of 24. Research indicates that homelessness results in significantly higher rates of emotional, behavioral, and immediate and long-term health problems for children who experience homelessness. In the four-county area served by the local Homeless Continuum of Care, the number of youth between the ages of 18 and 24 experiencing homelessness doubled between October 2020 and October 2021. Most mental illnesses manifest onset before the age of 25. UnityPoint Health's proposed Child and Adolescent Behavioral health Campus would create the opportunity and the capacity to provide needed treatment interventions that could mitigate the devastating link between mental health and homelessness.

My experience as a parent of three children with mental health conditions further supports the need for this type of multi-faceted treatment. My 31-year-old son has been in the mental health system since he was 3-years-old. Appropriate mental health services for children were so lacking in the Peoria area, that I moved my family to Chicago for several years when my son was only 7-years-old in order to access more appropriate mental health services for him as a child. Unfortunately, having returned to the area 18 years ago, the resources in the Peoria region for children with mental health conditions has not significantly improved. This proposed project would allow our community to more adequately meet the mental health needs of our children, creating improvements in long-term prognosis and overall well-being for our children and youth.

UnityPoint Health – Methodist Hospital has been the only inpatient provider of mental health services for children and adolescents in the region. However, its current facility does not have the physical capacity to meet the increasing need for such services. Thank you, in advance, for your consideration of support for this proposed project. If I may provide any additional information, please feel free to contact me at [director@phoenixcds.org](mailto:director@phoenixcds.org) or 309-222-2560.

Sincerely,

Christine E. Kahl  
President/CEO