

August 8, 2022

Ms. Debra Savage, Chair
Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board
525 West Jefferson St.
Springfield, IL 62761

Re: Relocation of Mental Health Unit to Advocate South Suburban Hospital

Dear Chairwoman Savage:

I am Dr. David Kemp, Psychiatry Section Chair and the Illinois Medical Director of Behavioral Health for Advocate Aurora Health. I write this letter in support of Advocate's application for establishment of a 27-bed acute mental illness category of service at Advocate South Suburban Hospital.

As the Psychiatry Section Chair, I have dedicated my professional career attending to the needs of those living with mental illness in the south Chicagoland area, working in the Emergency Departments at Advocate Christ Medical Center, Advocate Trinity and Advocate South Suburban hospitals. It is challenging but incredibly rewarding work. I, along with my colleagues who work beside me, am extremely proud of our service and dedication to the communities where we serve.

The last two years have been among the most difficult of my career. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, I've seen firsthand the devastating impact this crisis has had on residents in the south suburbs. We have seen elevated rates of anxiety, depression, and functional decline and cognitive changes among our patients, as well as increased rates of alcohol and substance abuse.

According to data from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, those struggling with mental health issues are at greater risk of substance abuse and harmful health outcomes. In fact, it is well documented that 37 percent of individuals with severe mental health issues smoke; nearly a third of adults with severe mental health issues are binge drinkers.

We see patients like this in our Emergency Department almost every day, treating patients in full crisis mode due to alcohol and substance abuse, and these anecdotal experiences have been reinforced by Advocate's Community Needs Assessment, showing a significant rise in mental health issues in an area deemed by the federal government as a Mental Health Professional Shortage Area.

The new program at Advocate South Suburban will meet our patients' needs where they are and bring the staffing and expertise they rightfully deserve. I know I speak for many of my


colleagues that Advocate's capital investment of \$21 million in a new, state-of-the-art inpatient facility will bring a much-needed resource to the community, and my staff is eager to make this move to work in such a forward-looking facility. We are particularly emphatic about the opening of 27 private patient rooms, fashioned with the requisite safety and patient protections, that will provide ample 1-on-1 therapy space, along with group therapy, medication management and other critical services in a secure unit.

The investment in inpatient services is complemented by Advocate's expansive and innovative approach to outpatient care, with more emphasis on behavioral health needs in the primary care setting and via telehealth services. This new integrated model allows Advocate to expand access to services, especially among patients who may not seek out counsel themselves or follow through with a physician referral.

To the distinguished members of the Board, I implore you to help us in the fight to deliver mental health care in this underserved region by supporting this Certificate of Need application.

I appreciate your service to the State of Illinois and for your consideration of this very important project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Kemp", written in a cursive style.

David Kemp, MD