



March 2nd, 2023

John P. Kniery, Administrator
Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board
525 W. Jefferson Street, 2nd Floor
Springfield, IL 62761

Re: US HealthVest and OSF Healthcare System Adult Behavioral Health Hospital, Project 23-008, Meadowview Hospital, Letter of Support

Dear Mr. Kniery:

My name is Mariama Ford and I am the Marketing and Admission Director at Sharon Healthcare Woods in Peoria, IL. We are a 152 bed Specialized Mental Health Residential Facility (SMHRF), the only one in the Peoria area and one of few outside of the Chicago area. We provide residential treatment for people with diagnosed mental health disorders, and most of our referrals come directly from hospitals. Locally, UnityPoint has been the lead source of these referrals but the need in the area is staggering and only growing.

I fully support the proposal to establish Meadowview Behavioral Hospital here in Peoria, because I see the need for it firsthand. In my line of work, I visit the hospital often and work closely with them in regards to our own residents. We have found an increase in mental health needs in the area, which has both mental health units at UnityPoint at capacity much of the time. There are times when our residents are stuck in the ED for days without ever getting a psych evaluation. Some of our local residents are having to go to Chicago to be evaluated and treated simply due to lack of available beds.

This impacts not just those in residential or nursing facilities, but also those in the community that are with family or homeless. The lack of local services means that sometimes, families are unaware of where their loved ones are transferred for treatment. If a resident doesn't



sign a release of information, and does not have a guardian, they can easily get sent to another city and discharged away from home. Those that are homeless are even more impacted, having to start over and over again in new places without established services. If insurance doesn't cover transportation, how are they to return home?

Not only will Meadowview Behavioral Hospital help meet the needs of the area, it will also allow service providers to perform their jobs more effectively. We need more options for our clients to get quality care, in a timely manner and at a local level. Again, the needs have drastically increased, especially since Covid and the response needs to be just as drastic. Mental health is a public health issue and needs to be addressed from multiple directions if we are going to make an impact. I sincerely urge you to consider and approve this application and the certificate of need, as it will have lasting positive effect and send a strong message that we care about our most vulnerable.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mariama I. Ford". The signature is stylized with large, flowing letters.

Mariama I. Ford

Marketing & Admission Director

Sharon Healthcare Woods