



Mr. John Knierly, Administrator
Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board
525 W. Jefferson Second Floor
Springfield, Illinois 62761

Dear Mr. Knierly:

I am writing on behalf of the Center for Rural Health and Social Service Development (CRHSSD) to express our enthusiastic support for the expansion of mental health in-patient beds and services at Harrisburg Medical Center. As an integral part of the SIU School of Medicine, our center is dedicated to addressing health disparities and assisting citizens in meeting their healthcare needs across central and southern Illinois.

For over 20 years, CRHSSD has partnered with area agencies through academics, research, and community-based programs to tackle the most pressing health and social service concerns affecting our communities. Our mission is to empower residents through research, program evaluations, needs assessments, demonstration projects, trainings, advocacy work, and policy recommendations. This expansion project aligns perfectly with our goal of improving the health of our rural communities.

Increasing the availability of in-patient mental health beds at Harrisburg Medical Center is a crucial step towards ensuring that individuals receive timely and effective treatment within their own communities. This initiative will reduce the need for patients to travel far from their families and support systems, thereby enhancing patient care and overall community well-being. Additionally, the project will help prevent the escalation of mental health issues and reduce unnecessary emergency room visits.

The successful completion of this project will also stimulate economic growth by creating high-wage employment opportunities within the healthcare sector. This aligns with CRHSSD's commitment to promoting meaningful change in the lives of residents and ensuring that at-risk communities receive the quality healthcare they deserve. Enhanced collaboration between Harrisburg Medical Center and local organizations, including CRHSSD, will foster a more resilient and supportive environment for all residents.





CRHSSD has a long history of addressing healthcare and social service issues impacting the lives and productivity of those in our region. Our initiatives, such as the Illinois CATCH onto Health program, CareRX, Community College Pathways to Medicine, Drug Endangered Children Alliance, Lincoln Scholars Program, Medical Reserve Corps, Opioid Use Disorder Project, Prescription Monitoring Program, Resilient Southern Illinois, Trauma Based Behavioral Health Fellowship, and Upward Bound, demonstrate our commitment to improving the health of our rural communities.

The expansion of mental health in-patient beds and services at Harrisburg Medical Center will have far-reaching benefits, including destigmatizing mental health treatment and encouraging more individuals to seek help. The ripple effects of improved mental health services will be felt across all sectors of our community, from schools and workplaces to community organizations and healthcare providers.

We respectfully urge the State of Illinois to approve the Certificate of Need application for this critical expansion project. The positive impact on mental health care accessibility, quality, and outcomes in Southeastern Illinois cannot be overstated. CRHSSD is committed to supporting this project every step of the way, recognizing its importance for the sustainable development and well-being of our community.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Franklin

Executive Director

Center for Rural Health and Social Service Development

Office of Community Care and Complex Initiatives

