January 28, 2019

Honorable State of Washington Senators and Representatives

Dear Legislators:

Subject: Spokane County Region $1.125M Annual Proviso Funding for Acute Care Diversion

As the Behavioral Health Advisory Board (BHAB) for the Spokane County Regional Service Area, which includes Adams, Ferry, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, and Stevens Counties, we would like to make you aware that the Governor’s budget for this coming legislative session did not earmark the continuation of the $1.125M annual proviso funding for Acute Care Diversion, which the Spokane region has received since 2008. This funding continues to be a priority for our region, as discussed in meetings with several of you during the last few months.

The Spokane Regional BHAB is requesting your support in continuing to earmark the $1.125M annual Acute Care Diversion Proviso funding for Spokane County in your legislative budgets. With the Health Care Authority cutting the non-Medicaid funding for Behavioral Health Administrative Service Organizations (BH-ASO) by 30% under Integrated Managed Care (IMC), this proviso funding is even more urgently needed.

In making this request, please refer to the following background and statistical information for your reference in understanding how the Spokane County Behavioral Health Organization has utilized the $1.125M annual proviso funding for diversion purposes from Eastern State Hospital and the community hospitals for eligible non-Medicaid, low income individuals when appropriate, as well as the impact if this proviso funding is not continued.

**BACKGROUND:**

In 2008, legislators approved a $1.125M annual proviso of non-Medicaid funds to support mental health needs in Spokane County, and with legislative support, this proviso has continued to be approved each legislative session since. This funding has been used to pay for acute care diversion programs and services for eligible non-Medicaid funded individuals, which in turn, reduces the number of individuals going into Eastern State Hospital (ESH) beds and psychiatric community inpatient hospital beds.

Prior to May 2017, the ESH quarterly bed census has historically been over Department of Social and Health Services’ (DSHS) determined bed allocation of ESH psychiatric beds for our region the majority of the time. This has resulted in our region often paying DSHS for the reimbursement of the ESH penalties with DSHS-provided non-Medicaid funds which are intended for non-Medicaid services. The major reason for this over allocated bed use in our
region is due to ESH being located in Spokane County, as well as Spokane County being a health care service hub for our region. Historically, currently, and under the IMC model, the Spokane region will continue to be severely limited in its ability to adequately fund the needed community diversion programs for non-Medicaid individuals, which is why we have used the $1.125M proviso funding for this purpose.

If the individuals we serve are not on Medicaid, our region must fund their services with the limited non-Medicaid state funding we receive, which must also be used to meet all of the Health Care Authority (HCA) contractual use requirements. Medicaid funding is not an alternative for non-Medicaid funded individuals in our system of care.

For 2018, the $1.125M represents approximately 48% of the total budgeted non-Medicaid treatment costs for our Spokane County Evaluation and Treatment Facilities (E&Ts). In 2017, the $1.125M was used to help serve approximately 388 eligible non-Medicaid individuals at our Spokane County E&Ts. This is 32% of the total number of all individuals served at this acute level of care in these E&Ts. Without this funding, many eligible non-Medicaid individuals would not be able to receive E&T services to help them stabilize and stay safe in our community.

REQUEST:

Spokane County needs this acute care diversion proviso funding continued in order to fund non-Medicaid treatment services provided at the two existing, adult 16-bed Evaluation and Treatment (E&T) facilities located in Spokane, Washington. This need exists because Spokane County is the health care service hub in our multi-county regional service area. Our region suffers from a shortage of diversion and stepdown options, as well as ESH being located in Spokane County. People and families come to Spokane County for high levels of behavioral health care from many states and from multiple counties (commonly referred to as the Spokane “drift” effect).

Without the $1.125M annual proviso funding for Spokane County, we estimate approximately 186 eligible non-Medicaid individuals annually will not be able to access the high-intensity care and hospital diversion programs from Spokane's two adult 16-bed E&T facilities which play a critical role in providing crisis and diversion services within our system of care.

On behalf of the Spokane Regional BHAB, we thank you for your years of support for the Spokane Regional Service Area’s behavioral health system of care and request your continued support for this ongoing need for the $1.125M annual proviso funding used for acute care diversion purposes. This will enable eligible non-Medicaid individuals in Spokane County to continue to be served at these E&T facilities with the appropriate level of high-intensity services, while diverting them from unnecessary state and community hospital care. Additionally, this will promote community safety as well as each individual’s recovery and resiliency.
We appreciate your time and attention to this critical need in the Spokane region.

Respectfully,

Michael Mainer, M.D., Chair  
Spokane County Regional BHAB

cc: Mary Kuney, Spokane County Chair  
    Al French, Spokane County Vice Chair  
    Josh Kerns, Spokane County Commissioner  
    Adams County Commissioners  
    Ferry County Commissioners  
    Lincoln County Commissioners  
    Pend Oreille County Commissioners  
    Stevens County Commissioners  
    Kathleen Torella, CSHCD Department Director  
    Tonya Sterns, CSHCD Department Assistant Director