



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

JOSEPH A. CURTATONE

MAYOR

May 8, 2013

Department of Public Health, Division of Health Care Quality  
Attn.: Closure Coordinator  
11<sup>th</sup> Floor, 99 Chauncy Street  
Boston, MA 02111

As a long time community partner and supporter of Cambridge Health Alliance (CHA) and on behalf of the City of Somerville, I am writing to express our deep concern over both Cambridge Health Alliance's proposal to reduce and, in some cases, eliminate psychiatric services to our city's most vulnerable population – adolescents and children aged 3 to 18 – as well as for the lack of stakeholder engagement in the proposal process.

At a time when documented youth depression is on the rise in Somerville (increasing 5% from 2010 to 2012), and with ample evidence that early intervention and mental health services are key in preventing negative outcomes, we are greatly concerned over CHA's plan to reduce the number of beds available to youths in need of acute psychiatric care from 27 to 11 (a forty percent reduction). This proposed consolidation would also impact the youngest of the young, eliminating beds for children from the ages of three to five years old.

We are deeply concerned that this decision will negatively impact access to health care for children not only in Cambridge and Somerville, but also statewide. Bed space for young children is already quite limited, with only 49 beds statewide dedicated exclusively to serving young children with mental health issues. CHA's proposal to eliminate 11 of these beds represents a nearly 25 percent reduction in inpatient pediatric psychiatric care available to children in the Commonwealth, including those in Somerville. The option for families struggling with these heartbreaking issues by CHA to turn to Franciscan Hospital for Children or Bay Ridge Hospital is not a true option. Franciscan Hospital for Children's waitlist has more than 25 children and Bay Ridge is operating at 98 percent capacity on any given day.

Since the announcement in early April that CHA would be seeking permission for this consolidation, local and state partners are only beginning to be brought into the conversation, with some of us learning of it only very recently from the newspaper. We have worked very closely with CHA in the past, and it is only when we work together that we can we address the financial concerns that CHA has while still protecting services vital to some of the most





vulnerable members of our communities. By leaving out local officials until the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, we risk losing the opportunity to continue these productive collaborations.

In addition, the data provided in the proposal is insufficient for a proper assessment of needs. Only one data point, fiscal year 2012, is referenced as the basis for the proposed reduction from 27 to 16 licensed beds across two psychiatric units. The plan fails to present the expected analysis of multi-year data that would better indicate trends. Without this information it is unclear whether FY2012 is an outlier. Adequate time is needed to review sufficient data, so that all stakeholders can carry out the rigorous analysis and review required to ensure we are able to best identify needs and propose solutions that will maintain critical care services.

Our communities and families need these services and are frankly frightened by the potential of losing those services. As we have proven over the years, we are willing to work with CHA in an open transparent manner to help meet the needs of our community. It is crucial that this proposed consolidation be shelved until CHA convenes stakeholders to provide full information on the rationale and impact of consolidation efforts so that we can have broad and deep discussion on how best to meet the challenges of an ever changing health care landscape while meeting the needs of our community.

Sincerely,

Joseph A. Curtatone  
Mayor