



Testimony of
Dr. Jeffrey Feit, Population Health and Community Health Officer

Valley Health System

House Appropriations Committee

January 28, 2022

I want to thank the Chairman, Delegate Wiley and all members of the Appropriations Committee for the opportunity to testify on behalf of Valley Health System and in support of this budget amendment.

My name is Dr. Jeffrey Feit and I am the Population Health and Community Health Officer for Valley Health System, a nonprofit health system serving a population of more than 500,000 in the Northern Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. This is Karen Dorr, the Director of Behavioral Health at Valley Health.

Valley Health is proposing to expand the Northwestern Crisis Intervention Team Assessment Center (CITAC). Currently this center operates only part of the day and only for adults. This funding will expand the space, provide funding for law enforcement, expand access to 24 hours, 7 days a week and serve adolescents in addition to adults.

At a time when Emergency rooms and Psychiatric facilities are under growing pressure related to volume, this crisis center decompresses these areas and frees Emergency room and law enforcement officials to attend to their other duties. Without this crisis intervention center, these patients typically occupy emergency department beds for long periods, creating safety concerns for patients and staff while failing to provide the needed therapeutic environment and care most beneficial for these patients.

This funding request would also support a Behavioral Health Urgent Care Center where Valley Health, in partnership with the Community Services Board and law enforcement agencies, would leverage its operational and philanthropic investments to improve psychiatric care.

The addition of a Behavioral Health Urgent Care Center alongside this crisis center improves earlier access to care preventing extended ED visits and hospitalizations for patients who could be managed as outpatients. This relieves the burden on Law Enforcement who collaborate to ensure safety when these patients are in the ED. In addition, the Behavioral Health Urgent Care Center would provide for safe discharge planning, again preventing escalating illness. By providing earlier access to behavioral health care services and preventing escalation to acute illness, the urgent care center would reduce the inpatient psychiatry bed needs at our local facility and in our state hospitals.

Valley Health strongly supports this budget amendment, as it would greatly improve behavioral health outcomes in the Commonwealth. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this important issue and we'd be happy to take any questions.