



February 4, 2008

Julie Sonier, Director  
Health Economics Program  
Division of Health Policy  
Minnesota Department of Health  
PO Box 64882  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55164

Dear Ms. Sonier:

I am writing in support of the application by Prairie St. John's to add new inpatient psychiatric and chemical dependency beds in Woodbury.

As a Ph.D. mental health provider for the last 13 years, I am all-too-familiar with the shortage of beds for mentally ill children, adolescents and adults in the Metro area. Demand for hospital services is growing, but availability is shrinking. Health East has eliminated its child psychiatric unit at St. Joseph's hospital and other hospital systems have not increased their capacity. Regions Hospital is adding 10 inpatient beds, but they are also adding 10 psychiatric beds in their emergency department, which is an acknowledgement that they and other Metro hospitals cannot admit psychiatric patients for the care they need. The need is particularly critical for children and adolescents.

Minnesota's mental health system is failing to meet the needs of patients. The current system requires admission of patients hundreds of miles and hours of driving away from family, friends and support systems. This is the single most ineffective approach of treatment.

Again, as a clinician who must deal with the aftermath of the failure of the current mental health system to provide the services needed to prevent further suicides, murders and pain by patients and their families, please find that the Prairie St. John's application is in the public interest.

Sincerely,

Deborah S. Simmons, PhD, LMFT

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