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December 7, 2016

Edward P. Ehlinger, MD, MPSH  
Commissioner  
Minnesota Department of Health  
P.O. Box 64975  
St. Paul, MN 55164-0975

Dear Commissioner Ehlinger,

I am writing on behalf of the Minnesota Academy of PAs (MAPA) in support of the request by PrairieCare to add 21 child and adolescent psychiatric beds at their Brooklyn Park facility.

MAPA is the voice of over 2,000 practicing physician assistants in Minnesota. As you know, PAs are key players in providing both primary and specialty care to patients across the State. The three and soon to be four PA training programs in Minnesota are educating needed clinicians at a time when health care profession shortages are threatening timely access to care.

Minnesota's PAs are advocates for the patients we serve as well as their families. An ongoing challenge for Minnesota patients and families is the lack of child and adolescent inpatient beds for mental health patients. Patients in crisis and in need of hospitalization are too often warehoused in hospital emergency departments or sent back home because of the lack of a bed. When beds are available, they are often hundreds of miles away, far from families and support networks.

The Governor's Task Force on Mental Health recently issued a report that identified adding more beds as one element of addressing Minnesota's mental health crisis. PrairieCare's application to add 21 beds at its Brooklyn Park hospital is consistent with the Task Force's recommendations and Minnesota's PAs encourage you to find that PrairieCare's application is in the public interest.

Sincerely,

Becky Ness, PA-C  
President, MAPA