



Big Sky Country
MONTANA STATE LEGISLATURE

August 22, 2022

Director Charlie Brereton
Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services
111 N. Sanders St.
Helena, MT 59601

Dear Director Brereton:

On July 25, 2022, the Montana Free Press published an article regarding Montana's recent Institutions of Mental Disease (IMD) waiver and the impacts that would have on Montana's mental health system, including the Montana State Hospital (MSH). In that article, you, as well as former Director Adam Meier, are quoted as indicating that DPHHS may not pursue a Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) re-accreditation of MSH. We write to express our deep concern at your lack of commitment to recovering millions of dollars in federal funding for MSH, and to urge you to immediately and publicly commit to pursuing CMS accreditation as soon as possible.

CMS re-accreditation for the State Hospital could go a long way towards stabilizing MSH's financial situation and secure its long term viability as an important component of our mental health care system. MSH is losing nearly \$8 million annually in federal funding in the absence of CMS accreditation. These federal funds not only could help ensure that MSH is fully funded at a level sufficient to ensure the facility operates properly, but could free up state general fund dollars to invest throughout the continuum of mental health care, shoring up community-based care in addition to MSH. It is irresponsible for the State to continue funding MSH completely out of the state budget when federal funds could be drawn down for this purpose.

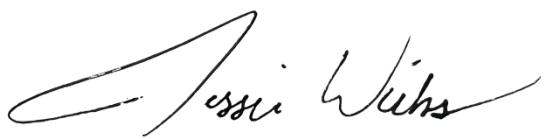
Beyond the financial implications, pursuing re-accreditation is an important step in demonstrating to the State Hospital's patients, staff, and the community at large that the State is committed to correcting the serious wrongs that led to MSH losing its accreditation to begin with. Montanans deserve to know that patients committed to the State Hospital are being treated humanely and with a high standard of care. The staff of MSH deserves to know their workplace is safe and that they will be treated with respect and dignity. With DPHHS unwilling to commit to re-accrediting MSH, it raises questions as to DPHHS's commitment to the State Hospital as a whole.

Director Brereton

Page 2

DPHHS must be transparent with regards to its goals for the State Hospital. If you indeed do not intend to seek re-accreditation for MSH, you must clearly say so and present publicly your plans for the future of MSH. From the beginning of MSH's loss of accreditation, there have been significant concerns that DPHHS seeks to privatize or close the State Hospital altogether. We are asking you today to tell us clearly that there are no such plans and, further, to definitively commit to seeking re-accreditation of the facility by CMS.

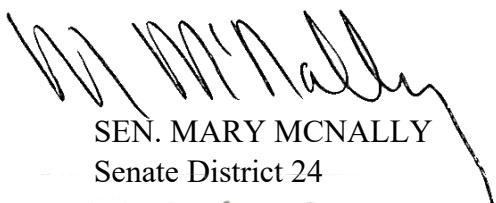
Sincerely,



SEN. JESSICA WICKS
Senate District 39



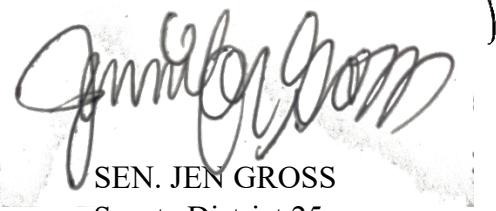
REP. SARA NOVAK
House District 77



SEN. MARY MCNALLY
Senate District 24



REP. MARY CAFERRO
House District 81



SEN. JEN GROSS
Senate District 25