

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3813
April 27, 2022

Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro
House Appropriations Committee
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Kay Granger
House Appropriations Committee
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair DeLauro and Ranking Member Granger:

"I am requesting funding for the UPMC Altoona Emergency Psychiatric Assessment Treatment and Healing (EMPATH) Unit Project in fiscal year 2023.

The entity to receive funding for this project is the UPMC Altoona Hospital Center, located at 620 Howard Ave., Altoona, PA 16601. UPMC Altoona is relocating its outpatient Behavioral Health Crisis Center from the hospital facility to a new location across the street in the medical office buildings. This relocation of crisis services and the implementation of a new mobile behavioral service are designed to substantially reduce the number of behavioral health patients presenting at the hospital's emergency department. With the recent extraordinary demands placed on the emergency department of UPMC Altoona by the pandemic and staffing shortages, this redesign of behavioral health services for the community is incredibly impactful and timely. Along with the relocation and enhancement of behavioral health crisis center services at UPMC Altoona, a significant redesign and remodeling of the behavioral health space associated with the hospital's emergency department are also being undertaken. With the recent significant investment by the hospital to create a new offsite crisis center with mobile behavioral health services, the hospital believes it is imperative to improve the continuum of behavioral health services at the hospital to complement the new crisis center services. A new emergency psychiatric assessment treatment and healing (EMPATH) unit is being designed and constructed. The EMPATH model is an innovation in behavioral health care that goes far beyond a fresh coat of paint and plush furniture. The EMPATH model transforms how the emergency room functions so behavioral health patients can receive quicker care and go home sooner. UPMC is currently operating an EMPATH-style unit at its Resolve Behavioral Health Center in Allegheny County. The new space at UPMC Altoona is designed to calm and stabilize patients experiencing a behavioral health crisis. The project requires a total reconstruction of an existing area adjacent to the hospital emergency department to implement this new model of care which is an empathetic rather than coercive care model. This project is a good use of taxpayer funds.

I certify that neither I nor my immediate family has any financial interest in this project."

Sincerely,



John Joyce, M.D.

Member of Congress

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