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CCAG Statement re Certificate of Need Docket Number 22-32513-CON

1 message

Liz Dupont-Diehl <ldd.ccag@gmail.com>
To: OHS@ct.gov

Fri, Jan 6, 2023 at 6:58 AM

To: Alicia J. Novi, Esquire
Hearing Officer
State of Connecticut Office of Health Strategy
450 Capitol Avenue, MS#51OHS
P.O. Box 340308
Hartford, CT 06134

Via email to OHS@ct.gov

Re: Certificate of Need Docket Number 22-32513-CON
The Norwalk Hospital Association
Termination of inpatient service offered by a hospital

To Whom it May Concern:

The Connecticut Citizen Action Group (CCAG), on behalf of our thousands of member families, writes today in opposition to Norwalk Hospital's plan to eliminate its inpatient psychiatric unit. We request that OHS deny this Certificate of Need application

Norwalk Hospital's proposed psych unit closure will be harmful for the many CT residents in need of this care — particularly financially and socially vulnerable Norwalk residents.

Studies have long indicated that serious behavioral health issues are linked to poverty. Norwalk Hospital reported that 39.1% of its inpatient psychiatric cases used Medicaid as their insurance in FY 2020. These patients and their families are likely dependent on public transportation, meaning a commute to Danbury will constitute a serious hardship and barrier to care, as there is no direct public transit route between Norwalk and Danbury. This loss of care could have severe negative consequences for individuals and this community.

Norwalk Hospital indicates that staffing issues are challenging – yet other hospitals are able to staff their psychiatric units.

Norwalk Hospital has stated the closing of its unit will not be harmful as it plans to transfer any patients to Danbury (about a 45-60 minute drive from Norwalk) but Danbury has no plans to increase the number of beds it has. It is also indicating it will expand outpatient BH care but we are only aware of a federal grant Norwalk Hospital received to open an outpatient clinic in Westport, not Norwalk.

Norwalk Hospital's Community Needs Health Assessment (CHNA) indicates that of the top five conditions for inpatient hospitalizations in FY 2019 of Norwalk residents, two of the top five are psychiatric. These facts, combined with the recent mental health crisis brought on by the Covid pandemic indicates that a responsible community hospital would be seeking to increase and not to decrease psychiatric care.

CCAG therefore strongly urges OHS to reject this application to close this needed unit. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Liz Dupont-Diehl
Associate Director, CT Citizen Action Group

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