



Milwaukee County

Supervisor Patricia Jursik, 8th District



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MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS IS NOT AN ISSUE ABOUT A BUILDING

Milwaukee, WI – Supervisor Patricia Jursik released the following statement this afternoon:

“The current Milwaukee County crisis in Mental Health is not an issue about a building. This is an issue about humane treatment of a very fragile population that is not served within the larger health system. The County must provide statutorily required protective placement and emergency care for those involved in a mental health crisis. The County will continue to have this responsibility.

“This crisis is also about the dollars that must be spent on this emergency mental health care. Over the past years, the County has closed wards, reduced care and vacated much of the mental health complex. This has exacerbated the mental health crisis that has led to recently reported problems. Both the Board and the County Executive agreed to appoint a panel of care advocates to review this issue and make recommendations. Before either the County Executive or the Board makes a premature decision about a building, it is imperative that we understand what the care model that the County can provide and sustain would be.

“In addition to the outside review, the Public Policy Forum is also studying these issues with hired experts reviewing our practices and expects to issue a report as early as September. It is a mistake to force decisions before we get this input. Milwaukee County may need to focus on emergency, crisis care and disengage from providing long-term care and running a hospital. In the past, the County found running a county hospital was not financially feasible or sustainable over the long term. County General was transferred to the Medical College and Froedtert. Unfortunately, the mental health hospital was peeled-off from this transfer. It is time we revisit this issue, and it is time for our Executive and Chairman to provide leadership. The larger medical community and ‘non-profit’ hospitals have a role to play. It is time for all of these groups to come to the table and enter into the dialogue of how mental health care is to be provided in the County.

“Is it time to think of a regional facility? Once the private hospitals become providers, the borders may disappear. Finally, the current formula used by Milwaukee County in running the Mental Health Complex causes the County to lose reimbursement from Medicaid, putting more costs on the property tax levy. None of these issues get solved by just constructing a building. For all of these reasons, I decline to join my colleagues in this premature resolution to construct a new hospital building without knowing what the care model will be. We cannot continue as we have in the past.”

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