

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-1503

March 31, 2023

Chairwoman Kay Granger  
House Appropriations Committee  
H-307, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro  
House Appropriations Committee  
1036 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Granger and Ranking Member DeLauro:

I am requesting the Appropriations Committee provide a funding level of \$1,000,000.00 for the Polk County Mental Health and Substance Abuse Resource Center located 1914 Carpenter Ave., Des Moines, IA 50314. The intended recipient is Polk County, Iowa located at 111 Court Ave, Suite 300, Des Moines, IA 50319. The funding will be used to renovate Polk County's existing building, relocate the Crisis Observation Center and Psychiatric Urgent Care to this location, and construct a new Sobering Center. A sobering center is the one piece in Polk County's continuum of mental health and substance abuse services that is still missing. Co-locating these services would provide an easier mode of access for individuals in need of help and a more efficient system for law enforcement communities to navigate.

More specifically, once complete, the Polk County Mental Health and Substance Abuse Resource Center will offer the following:

- Triage/Assessment
- Service Coordination
- Crisis Observation Center for Adults
- Crisis Observation Center for Children
- Behavioral Health Urgent Care for Adults and Children
- Sobering Center

This is a priority because too often people who abuse drugs or alcohol end up in Polk County jail or emergency rooms when they should be offered a therapeutic alternative. Expecting jails and emergency rooms to effectively treat inebriated individuals is not effective for the individual nor is it an efficient use of taxpayer funds. A sobering center will provide a medically supervised sobering area for the public intoxicant and interrupt the cycle of serial inebriation. A convenient drop off for law enforcement will allow a quicker return to the street and a reduction in sobering at the jail.

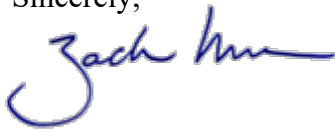
This project is a valuable use of taxpayer funds because jail and emergency rooms are expensive. It is estimated that 5-12 people per day could be diverted from Polk County jails and emergency rooms if a sobering center were available. For example, in FY21/22 there were 91 people who

were taken to the Crisis Observation Center instead of jail, saving \$420,000. During the same time frame, the mobile crisis team diverted 1,075 people from jail and emergency rooms. If these individuals were taken to the emergency room, it would have cost over \$1,000,000. Mental health and substance abuse programs are effective at diverting individuals in crisis from the jail and emergency rooms, saving taxpayer dollars. The sobering center would act as a similar diversion tool to our Crisis Observation Center and Mobile Crisis team.

This project has a Federal nexus because the funding provided is for purposes authorized by section 501 of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (34 U.S.C. § 10152).

I certify that I have no financial interest in this project, and neither does anyone in my immediate family.

Sincerely,



Zach Nunn