



July 9, 2021

Dear Kanawha County Commissioners:

I am writing on behalf of our uninsured and underinsured West Side residents in need of behavioral health and substance use disorder counseling. As you know we recently opened a new clinic at 511 Central Avenue on the West Side to provide primary and preventive care and access to all the services that our main clinic on East Washington Street provides. After being open for a month, the need for an experienced on-site behavioral health/substance use disorder therapist is very apparent. Almost daily new patients present with complaints of depression, anxiety and/or substance use disorder. These problems have been compounded by the COVID pandemic and the collateral financial stresses and strains it caused.

Last week we had a young mother of a 1 year old who was 7 months pregnant with her second child present to us for care. We were able to successfully get her to agree to go into treatment. We had to send someone from our main clinic over there which held up the process and risked the patient leaving before her care was completed. We have found in our experiences with this population that if you do not meet them where they are when they are ready to commit to sobriety you will lose them back into their addiction.

We had another young man who presented with severe depression and was at risk for committing suicide. He desperately needed to see a counselor immediately to help establish the level of his risk and to follow-up with him there. While we were able to get him started on medication that day we could not connect him with a therapist then and there which is what he so desperately needed. We are learning from the residents of the West Side that behavioral health and is such a taboo subject and coming in for care can be challenging. By creating a safe space with a minority focus of equitable health care we are creating a safe zone for those in need to seek the care they need.

I am respectfully requesting one-time support of \$150,000 from the Recovery Act for the hiring of a full-time behavioral health/substance use disorder counselor who can be on-site at the West Side office and ready to help meet the needs of the community. This will cover the salary and fringe benefits for the new hire for 24 months at which time we will find additional grant resources to cover the continued cost of employment. The impact this position will have on the community is immeasurable.

We appreciate your long-standing support of our organization and the work that we do.

Very Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Angie Settle", is written over a large, stylized blue scribble.

Dr. Angie Settle, CEO
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