



## NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE

February 12, 2019

Jose Acevedo, M.D., MBA, President & C.E.O.  
Finger Lakes Health  
196 North Street  
Geneva, New York 14456

Dr. Ann Sullivan, Commissioner  
New York State Office of Mental Health  
44 Holland Avenue  
Albany, New York 12229

Dear President Acevedo and Commissioner Sullivan:

We appreciate this opportunity to contact you directly to share our deep concern over the recent announcement that Finger Lakes Health plans to shut down the Inpatient Behavioral Health Unit at Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hospital in Penn Yan, New York, which we represent.

Just as you would see a primary care doctor every year, it is important to have a “check-up” on our mind as well.

It is critical to note that we share the belief that Yates County and the surrounding area faces a rapidly growing mental health crisis, a crisis that will be exacerbated by this closing and its devastating impact on local residents.

It is our understanding that the decision to cease admissions of new patients effective yesterday, Monday, February 11<sup>th</sup>, was only communicated late last week and, consequently, came as a great shock to employees, patients, the community at large, as well as local, state, and federal officials including ourselves.

The lack of mental health services has left many rural, Upstate communities, including the residents of Yates County, without the critical support services necessary to address the current crisis and ongoing mental health needs. We should be working to expand mental health services, not take them away from people.

We are confident that you know as well as we do that rural communities face many and more different obstacles not common with big cities, one of which is the proximity to the delivery of services at a level that provides accessibility, efficiency, and cost effectiveness. While we

recognize the struggles Finger Lakes Health has experienced both with the efficiency of providing mental health services and the recruitment of psychiatrists, we are writing to urge you to immediately work closely together to prevent the complete closure of the Inpatient Behavioral Health Unit at Soldiers & Sailors.

We are committed to provide whatever assistance is necessary and to advocate for the resources Finger Lakes Health requires to continue the Inpatient Behavioral Health Unit at Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hospital to continue meeting the need for these critical services throughout Yates County and the surrounding area. Perhaps most importantly, we implore you to reconsider the decision to cease admissions of new patients and the future closure of the unit.

Sincerely,



Tom Reed  
Member of Congress



Thomas F. O'Mara,  
NYS Senate, 58<sup>th</sup> District



Philip A. Palmesano,  
NYS Assembly, 132<sup>nd</sup> District

cc: David Wollner, Legislative Liaison, NYS Office of Mental Health  
Dundee CSD Superintendent Kelly Houck  
Penn Yan CSD Superintendent Howard Dennis  
Yates County Administrator Winona B. Flynn  
Yates County Legislature Chairman Douglas Paddock  
George Roets, Director, Yates County Community Services