

News Release

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## **NAMI Lansing Supports University of Michigan Health - Sparrow Lansing Plan to Build a New Behavioral Health Facility in Lansing**

NAMI Lansing, mid-Michigan's voice on mental illness, overwhelmingly supports UM Health-Sparrow's plan to meet the needs of the Mid-Michigan community by building a new, much-needed 120-bed behavioral health facility in Lansing at the site of the former Eastern High School. The proximity to the current emergency department is key to timely and effective mental health treatment.

Like any other health crisis, it is important to address mental health emergencies effectively and quickly. Behavioral health facilities in Mid-Michigan are limited, and the facilities in place are overburdened.

Dr. Baker from UM Health-Sparrow shared in a recent Op-Ed: "Since 2020, the emergency room team has evaluated some 4,500 behavioral health patients annually and is on pace to see even more in 2024. These are our friends, relatives, and children who are struggling with severe illnesses and devastating symptoms, ranging from depression and anxiety to psychosis and addiction. They often are desperate and struggling to survive."

NAMI Lansing families know the difficulties in finding psychiatric hospital care for their loved ones, with a particular need for adolescent beds. Wait times in the emergency department for a medically necessary hospital bed can take days or weeks for some populations, with hospitalization finally occurring in another area or even a different state. Some people leave the emergency department in frustration and despair, unable to tolerate the lengthy wait in a setting designed for short-term evaluation and treatment.

Mental health treatment and suicide prevention are critical health care issues. When someone experiences a mental health crisis, they are more likely to interact with a law enforcement officer than a medical professional. When law enforcement responds to behavioral health emergencies, people in crisis often end up in jails, emergency departments, on the street, or worse, they are harmed or killed during the encounter.

Improving the continuum of mental health care by increasing the access to mental health hospital beds is essential. Delay and denial of care results in unacceptable results for patients.