

June 28, 2010

The Honorable Eugene L. Dodaro
Acting Comptroller General of the United States
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548

RE: Nomination to the Board of Governors, Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI)

Dear Acting Comptroller General Dodaro:

On behalf of the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare (National Council) – an organization representing 1,700 Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs) and other community-based mental health and addiction providers serving over 6 million low income children and adults with mental health and substance use disorders – the staff and the board are writing to nominate Carl Clark, MD to serve on the Board of Governors of the PCORI.

The Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute is charged with overseeing the government’s work related to comparative clinical effectiveness research, a critical activity that compares health outcomes and the clinical effectiveness, risks, and benefits of 2 or more medical treatments, services, or items.

Improving the care of persons with mental illness is critical. A brief survey of the behavioral health field reveals alarming levels of premature death, disability and extremely poor social policy outcomes. As an illustration, a series of recent studies consistently show that persons with serious mental illnesses who are clients of the public mental health system **die sooner than other Americans, and have an average age of death at 52.** These appalling health disparity statistics flows directly from consistent policy failures to properly integrate primary care services into community mental health settings.

The 2008 National Survey on Drug Use and Health indicates that 51.6% of the U.S. population age 12 or older are current drinkers of alcohol; 23% were binge drinkers, meaning they had five or more drinks on at least one occasion in the 30 days prior to the survey; and 6.9% were heavy drinkers, defined as binge drinking on 5 or more days in the past month.¹ They survey data also indicates that 8% of the U.S. population over age 12 are illicit drug users. The survey further shows that in 2008, there were 23.1 million persons aged 12 or older who needed treatment for an illicit drug or alcohol use problem (9.2% of the population); however, only 2.3 million received treatment thus leaving an estimated 20.8 million persons (8.3%) with an unmet need for treatment.

New studies show that up to 50 percent of the 2 million inmates in federal, state and local criminal justice facilities have diagnosable mental disorders. Furthermore, over the past two decades, reports from varied and respected sources including the non-profit foundations, the Council of Governments and state agencies have concluded that up to half of the 1 million children in the nation’s juvenile justice and foster care systems experience serious mental and emotional disturbances. However, the number of youth actually receiving

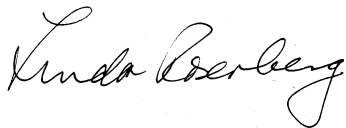
¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2009). *Results from the 2008 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National Findings* (Office of Applied Studies, NSDUH Series H-36, HHS Publication No. SMA 09-4434). Rockville, MD.

appropriate mental health treatment in either of these systems is abysmally low. These disastrous policy outcomes are an indication that current treatment interventions are insufficient, and perhaps inadequate, to the treatment needs of persons with these disorders.

It is estimated that it takes anywhere between 15-20 years for new interventions to be fully incorporated into usual care in mental health settings². Given this unmet demand for addiction and mental health clinical interventions and the “languish effect” of converting research into practice, initiatives such as the PCORI must strive to bridge the gap between research and service delivery. In determining the membership of Board of Governors of the PCORI, the Comptroller General of the United States should select representatives from communities with particular needs that must be addressed in comparative effectiveness research. I urge you to select Dr. Carl Clark, who has, throughout his distinguished career, shown a tireless commitment to research-informed clinical practice. He is a recognized leader in his state, being named to Governor Ritter’s AIDS Council and Denver Healthy People 2010. Dr. Clark has served as the Chief Executive Officer for the Mental Health Center of Denver for over ten years and in this role, has successfully transitioned the organization to become a Center of Excellence for the delivery of mental health services. The organization has created validated instruments to measure mental health recovery and look for patterns to further understand the recovery process and impact on overall health outcomes. In 2008, the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation named Dr. Clark one of five Livingston Fellows.

Our field desperately needs information on which interventions to use to increase social functioning, reduce symptoms, and support patient recovery. The work of the PCORI can be instrumental in this process. Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We are happy to provide you with any additional information you may need.

Sincerely,



Linda Rosenberg, MSW, President and CEO
National Council for Community Behavioral
Healthcare



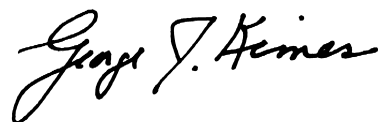
William H. Kyles, Board Chair
National Council for Community Behavioral
Healthcare



Neal Cash, President/CEO
Community Partnership of Southern Arizona



David M. Ptaszek, CEO
Pennyroyal Center



George J. Kimes, Executive Director
Pennsylvania Community Providers Association



Tim Swinfard, President & CEO
Missouri Coalition of Community MH Centers

² Balas EA, Boren SA. Managing clinical knowledge for health care improvement. In: Bommel J, McCray AT, editors. Yearbook of Medical Informatics: 2000: Patient-Centered Systems. Stuttgart, Germany: Schattauer Verlagsgesellschaft mbH; 2000



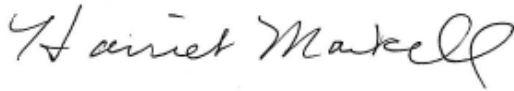
Frank Anselmo, CEO
Community Behavioral Healthcare Association



Jeffrey Walter, President & CEO
Rushford Center, Inc.



Herb Cromwell, Director
Community Behavioral Health Assoc. of Maryland



Harriet Markell, Associate Director
California Council of Community MH Agencies



Richard LeClerc, President & CEO
Gateway Healthcare, Inc.



Ralph Provenza, Executive Director
United Counseling Service



Emily L. Jenkins
President/CEO
Arizona Council of Human Service Providers

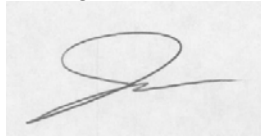
Mary Ann Bergeron, Executive Director
Virginia Assoc. of Community Services Boards



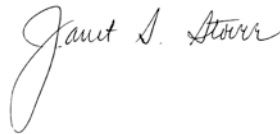
Peter Campanelli, President & CEO
Institute for Community Living



Michael Vizena, Executive Director
Michigan Association of CMH Boards



James Marhold, President/CEO
Declarations, Inc.



Janet Stover, Executive Director
Illinois Association of Rehabilitation Facilities



Debra Wentz, CEO
New Jersey Assoc. of Mental Health Agencies, Inc.



Richard Van Horn, President Emeritus
Mental Health America of Los Angeles

Michael J. Hammond
Association of Community MH Centers of Kansas

Cindy Kaestner, Vice President/Executive Director
Abbe, Inc.