



Common Ground
helping people move from crisis to hope

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Dear Representative Morse,

Thank you for meeting with us this morning to hear about the work we have been doing over the past year to build our Virtual Behavioral Health Urgent Care (BHUC) program at Common Ground.

As I watched the project unfold this past year, I noted the initial private investment we were able to secure was vital in helping us build the infrastructure for this new and cutting-edge service in Michigan. We built the technological platform, developed an operational model, prioritized privacy laws and internet security, recruited and hired clinical experts, and trained our professional staff to deliver a warm, caring, and healing therapeutic service to people across the state in an easy to use and quickly responsive, virtual way. We piloted the service, starting with a few days a week and limited hours and have had a very positive response, serving thousands.

When I was tasked with setting up the Resiliency Center in Oxford, Michigan after the devastating mass gun violence event in November 2021, I witnessed firsthand the surge in need for behavioral health care in the wake of that event. The local providers in the area worked hard to fill the need, but it was impossible to meet the demand and we saw ongoing frustration in the community with the wait lists to see a therapist. Over time, as we were building the BHUC program, we realized through our work in Oxford how helpful virtual behavioral healthcare could be to fill gaps anywhere there was a need. With that realization, we arranged specialized training for our BHUC team so they would understand the unique needs of mass violence victims, and other victims of crime.

When we were asked to bring a Resiliency Center to East Lansing after the mass violence event in February 2023, we knew that Virtual BHUC could be leveraged to support the community in an even more meaningful way than it had in Oxford. The Michigan State University community is widespread. Students go home on breaks, graduate, and transfer, so we need to serve them wherever they are. Furthermore, there are many individuals who were affected by the shooting who are not eligible under the federal grant rules but need and deserve care. I am comforted that the Common Ground BHUC service is here for my Resiliency Center Team as a resource for us to draw upon to serve the communities that are hurting.

Thank you for considering our request for a \$1,700,000 appropriation to support the next phase of the Common Ground Behavioral Health Urgent Care program. This one-time investment over two years will allow us to solidify a model that has been tested and proven through our pilot program toward a sustainable future. As part of the sustainability plan, Common Ground is a State-Sanctioned Crisis Services Provider and a Designated Collaborative Organization (DCO) with two Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHC). With the virtual nature of our BHUC, we can expand our DCO relationships with CCBHCs across the state. We are also growing our commercial insurance contracts which will fund the BHUC program over time.

Finally, we will use this investment by the State of Michigan to grow the program from its current four days to seven days per week, add critical staff, ensure ongoing specialized training, and educate the public beyond Oakland County, Oxford, and East Lansing on the benefits of this cutting-edge service.

We thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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Chief Crisis Operations Officer

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