

February 4, 2020

Mr. Jarrett Crum
Chief Hospital Officer
AltaPointe Health
5750-A Southland Drive
Mobile, Alabama 36693

**RE: Letter of Support for AltaPointe Health for 1115 Severe Mental Illness (SMI)
Waiver Opportunity**

Dear Mr. Crum:

The Baldwin County Commission, during its regularly scheduled meeting held on February 4, 2020, authorized me as Chairman, to execute this letter to express the Commission's support for AltaPointe Health for 1115 Severe Mental Illness (SMI) Waiver Opportunity that would allow states to receive federal funding for services provided to adults with severe mental illness. This waiver, if approved, will result in significant benefits for the Mobile region by increasing access to in-patient psychiatric care.

AltaPointe Health is currently the sole psychiatric inpatient provider for adults in Baldwin County. The Baldwin County Commission is in full support of their pursuit of this waiver to increase access to in-patient psychiatric care in the Mobile region.

The SMI 1115 waiver would allow the Mobile region to regain and sustain the benefits achieved under the Medicaid Emergency Psychiatric Demonstration (MEPD), a three-year project which abruptly ended in 2016, including:

- More inpatient beds and less "boarding" in hospital emergency departments
- Diversion of patients referred by community mental health centers directly to an Institution for Mental Disease as opposed to the emergency room and medical/surgical units not intended for psychiatric stabilization;
- Access to post-discharge, follow-up care resulting in lower readmission rates

When the MEPD concluded, the immediate result for Mobile was a loss of available psychiatric beds that have not improved in the 3+ years since. Hospitals can medically screen and stabilize psychiatric patients, but are not an option for those requiring an extended stay. Mobile Infirmary closed its psychiatric unit in 2017.

Mental illness is a serious and concerning issue in Baldwin County. It is our recommendation the Alabama Medicaid Agency support AltaPointe Health Systems' pursuit of an SMI 1115 waiver that will allow for increased patient access to inpatient psychiatric care.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (251) 972-8555 or Wayne Dyess, County Administrator, at (251) 580-2550.

Sincerely,

Billie Jo Underwood, Chairman
Baldwin County Commission

BJU/keg

cc: Wayne Dyess
Baldwin County Commissioners
Baldwin County Legislative Delegation