



The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-230 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

We call on Congress to pass H.R. 8979, the Behavioral Health Crisis Care Centers Act. At a time when mental health issues are at an all-time high, cities and other local jurisdictions are facing a critical need for funding for behavioral health interventions and crisis stabilization services to help those in need. This legislation will help address these growing demands on our behavioral health system.

Our first responders—both at the Seattle Police Department and Seattle Fire Department—encounter many people daily in need of a “landing spot”—somewhere to receive care and monitoring for their behavioral health needs. First responders have traditionally sent these individuals to local hospital emergency rooms due to the lack of crisis centers in the area. While hospitals are undoubtedly the best place for critical medical needs, there is no need for the vast majority of people with mental health conditions to be sent to the emergency room. Not only has this exacerbated the hospital shortage and placed strain on our healthcare professionals, but this has also prevented many individuals from receiving the holistic care they need.

Over the past decade, the City of Seattle’s support of behavioral health services has grown dramatically due to greater awareness of how to serve people with mental health needs. We strive to provide individuals with holistic care, rather than sending them to hospitals or prisons. This movement has led to a growing need for organizations that can provide this type of care. Locally, we are working to coordinate our efforts with King County to increase the capacity and number of these centers, including through the County’s Mental Illness and Drug Dependency tax. However, we face a severe shortage of available centers and beds in Seattle for those in need.

Congressman Smith’s legislation will fill this critical gap by funding behavioral health crisis care centers. These centers are increasingly recognized as an alternative approach to help those in crisis. Building upon the model of the Downtown Emergency Services Center in Seattle, they provide not only a safe physical location for individuals, but also wraparound services to address their physical and mental health conditions and other needs. Critically, they also allow individuals to remain in their communities—deepening

their sense of stability, allowing them to put down roots, and helping them heal through the support and care of their neighbors.

We hope you will join us in supporting this legislation and welcome the opportunity to work with you to ensure it is signed into law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bruce Harrell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mayor Bruce Harrell
Seattle, Washington