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Lopez, Donna

From: Tracy Winn [t.winn@earthlink.net]
Sent: Monday, May 05, 2014 1:52 PM
To: Lopez, Donna
Subject: submitting comment for the record 5/5/14 city council meeting

Hi Donna,

Thank you for including this as a comment for the record for tonight's meeting.

It takes some courage to put my name out here so publicly. I am doing so because so much is at stake at Cambridge City Hospital. My family has lived in Cambridge since 1955. Our daughter, who is in her twenties, also a Cambridge resident, attempted suicide a year ago. She was brought to the Cambridge City Hospital Psych Emergency Department by ambulance in terrible shape, dehydrated, and in the sort of pain that most of us do not ever have to experience. She was terrified by the strength of her feelings, angry at having been brought forcibly to the hospital, and a flight risk.

The Psych E.D. was a calm place, staffed by experts trained to deal with the trauma and agitation of those who suffer from mental illness. Dr. Cathy Pemberton was able to diagnose and give our daughter the help she needed in a large, quiet space removed from the comings and goings of other ambulances, away from other families with children, and away from the sights and sounds of other trauma victims. Our daughter spent the night in a bed in the Emergency Department and with the help of the expert staff, connected with her therapist and was successfully and peacefully moved to another hospital the next day. She is doing much better now.

This would not have been the case were she to have been brought in say, this coming summer with the cuts that have been made. The changes being made to the Psych E.D. at Cambridge City Hospital would have devastating consequences for a fragile and volatile segment of the Cambridge population.

We have experience with going to general emergency rooms in hospitals that do not have sufficient numbers of trained psychiatric workers, and where everyone waits together. The trauma inflicted on our daughter in those places was worse than what brought her there in the first place. In the Psych Emergency Department at Cambridge City Hospital of a year ago, she was not stuck into a small locked room where nurses - not trained in the tricky business of giving care to people who are out of their minds with psychic pain - would peek in intermittently. She did not have to suffer further upset because of her surroundings or because the personnel was not sufficiently trained. She did not have to leave there with the embarrassment and sorrow of having scared any little kids also waiting in the E.R.

Dear Council members, please intervene and restore the staff and space dedicated to providing psychiatric emergency care at Cambridge City Hospital. More of us than you know are counting on you.

Tracy Winn