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May 4, 2017

Colorado State House of Representatives  
Denver, Colorado 80203

Dear Representatives Salazar and Sias, and House Members:

The Colorado Psychiatric Society (CPS) supports SB 17-207, Strengthen Colorado Behavioral Health Crisis System and respectfully requests that you support the Re-Engrossed bill.

In 2016, Governor Hickenlooper directed the Colorado Department of Human Services to create a task force to develop solutions to the underlying problems highlighted by Senate Bill 16-169. CPS had two members appointed to the Governor's Mental Health Hold Task Force, which was tasked with ensuring that Coloradans experiencing mental health crises have access to appropriate mental health services while preserving their fundamental rights. SB 207 incorporates recommendations from the Task Force as well as suggestions from other groups. Specifically:

- **CPS strongly supports ending the use of jails for persons who have not committed crimes.** Change is needed because with Colorado's current system, the very patients who have the *greatest* need for immediate treatment may currently be taken to a law enforcement facility that is not able to provide *any* immediate treatment because the individual has demonstrated aggression.
- **CPS strongly supports measures to strengthen the current crisis system and their ability to coordinate and adequately care for individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis in the least restrictive environment.** SB 207 requires regional coordination for 24 hour per day services; walk-in centers statewide be equipped to accept individuals in need of an emergency 72-hour mental health hold; mobile response units be available to respond to a behavioral health crisis anywhere in the state within two hours; and allows a person experiencing a mental health crisis to be taken to an emergency medical services facility if a DHS-approved facility is not available.

The statewide framework created by the crisis system strengthens community partnerships and ensures that first responders are equipped with a variety of options for addressing behavioral health crises that meet the needs of the individual in a clinically appropriate setting. We strongly urge you to support SB 17-207.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Elizabeth Lowdermilk, MD.

Elizabeth Lowdermilk, MD  
President, Colorado Psychiatric Society  
Member, Mental Health Holds Task Force

Handwritten signature of Richard Martinez, MD.

Richard Martinez, MD  
Member, Mental Health Holds Task Force

Cc: Debbie Wagner, CPS Lobbyist  
George Kalousek, MD, Co-Chair, CPS Legislative Committee  
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