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To: Lee County Legislative Delegation  
From: Kevin Lewis, CEO SWFAS and David Winters, CEO LMH  
Re: Legislative Issues for 2013 Session  
Date: January 16, 2013

As you approach the 2013 legislative session, our companies have several issues we would like to share with you.

As Florida is examining the pros and cons of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) this could be a major impact on the provision of behavioral healthcare services. Our companies have been local providers of services for a combined 75+ years.

Due to the potential impact of PPACA, we would urge the Legislature not to make major changes in the current system of care – changes that may be totally altered if/when PPACA's impact occurs as soon as 2014.

We oppose changing the current reimbursement method for Crisis Stabilization Units in Florida. The study submitted to the Legislature in January, 2013 suggests moving toward an alternative strategy by July, 2014. To our understanding, the potential impact of PPACA was not factored into this recommendation.

We would ask that current funding for mental health and substance abuse services to Floridians that is non-recurring (nearly \$24 million) be considered for replacement with recurring funding. Florida is 48<sup>th</sup> out of 50 states in per capita funding for mental health services, and in the mid 30's out of 50 states in per capita funding for substance abuse treatment services. We pay the costs for this lack of investment in our child welfare, correctional and healthcare systems where often more expensive and less effective strategies are employed.

As Florida looks at the PPACA and possible implementation, several critical issues emerge. The "essential benefit" must include adequate behavioral healthcare service

options. The linkage between the chronic, brain based disorders that constitute mental illness and addictions and primary health care outcomes that are less positive and more expensive is well documented. Florida can incentivize greater integration of care and increased effectiveness via system design in this area. Second, the PPACA must address the workforce issue. The bulk of Florida's historical providers work in accredited company settings and the plan design must preserve their ability to provide care. To do otherwise would eliminate thousands of jobs and eliminate access to meaningful and effective care being provided.

Last, we are pleased to report that our respective Boards have worked over a year to develop a plan to merge our two companies with the goal of improving access and quality of care for citizens of southwest Florida. It is our goal to finalize this merger by July, 2013 and be able to combine our companies talents and historical roles to offer the best care possible to our patients, families and communities served. In addition, we will continue our efforts to integrate behavioral healthcare into the mainstream of primary healthcare to better serve those in need as effectively as possible.