

April 6, 2022

VIA EMAIL

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

It is my pleasure to provide this letter of support for the Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital's (ZSFG) request for \$2.1 million in Fiscal Year 2023 Congressionally Directed Spending to support its "Transform Mental and Behavioral Health Fund (TMBHF)".

As you know, for more than 150 years, Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital has been the leader in San Francisco's comprehensive commitment to public health. In the most pivotal moments of our city's history—providing shelter and treatment following the San Francisco Earthquake of 1906, opening the first inpatient and outpatient AIDS units in the country in 1981 (which was made possible because of your leadership), combatting the past two years of the complex COVID-19 pandemic — ZSFG has served and protected all populations of the San Francisco community in critical times of need.

Today, ZSFG is on the frontlines of responding to the homelessness crisis in the Bay Area. In 2020 (the last year for complete data), more than 35,000 individuals in the Bay Area were homeless, the majority of them unsheltered, creating a cascade of medical conditions that are a challenge to diagnose and treat. Most prominent among these issues is mental health, creating an entangled loop where one condition exacerbates the other. As San Francisco's only public hospital and level 1 Trauma Center, ZSFG is the sole source of care for the majority of the homeless population in the city – which has been exacerbated by mental health issues. More than 60 percent of the 8,000 patients the hospital serves each year in its psychiatric emergency department experience chronic homelessness or housing instability. Investing in the hospital's capacity to serve the mental health needs of its patients is crucial to ensuring all patients, regardless of socioeconomic status, receive equitable access to the full continuum of medical care. Providing timely and comprehensive mental health services to Bay Area homeless will also complement existing federal, state, and local initiatives to address systemic issues that cause homelessness.

In Fiscal Year 2022, your Congressionally Directed Spending requests addressed the homelessness and mental health challenges from a number of perspectives, and I thank you for your leadership on this issue. ZSFG's Fiscal Year 2023 request will address other

elements of these challenges that have not yet been funded in the Bay Area, and for which federal support is vital to encourage and leverage private philanthropic efforts and make the city a safer place going forward. The \$2.1 million requested for the TMBHF would be used to:

- Coordinate care between diverse teams of medical practitioners, including Addiction Care, Inpatient Psychiatric Services, Psychiatric Emergency Services, Social Medicine, and other specialized medical professionals at ZSFG and other Bay Area facilities.
- Integrate dedicated Patient Navigators to deploy a dedicated support system that allows patients to focus on recovery.
- Collect and analyze complex datasets that facilitate better patient outcomes and evolution of high-impact medical services.
- Share best practices and train a wider array of Bay Area medical professionals to address mental and behavioral health issues.

On a very small scale, we have been able to test these approaches and we know that they work. This confidence is based on the first round of the TMBHF, which resulted in an increase of social medicine capacity, improved work flows with community partners such as the Homeless Prenatal Program, and implemented better tools to track social determinants of health, map support networks, connect people to community service and measure outreach and program effectiveness. I am optimistic that the second round of this Fund will help improve our health care system even more.

Sadly, San Francisco carries the unfortunate distinction of U.S. cities with the highest rates of homelessness. San Francisco must continue to face this challenge head on and lead the country in developing solutions to better serve our nation's homeless populations. ZSFG's work to draw together experts in the fields of addiction, psychiatry, and emergency medicine to develop innovative models for treating the mental health needs of our most underserved patients is important for our community, the State of California, and the nation. For those reasons, I encourage you to support ZSFG's request for federal funding of its mental and behavioral health program

Sincerely,



Judy Guggenheimer