



Board of County Commissioners

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March 15, 2019

Dear Vail Health Board Members:

Eagle County identified mental health as a top priority in 2017, and it is clearly a priority throughout our communities. However, the need for services is far greater than the availability; providers, crisis beds, and short- and long-term care are in short supply.

When County voters approved a tax on marijuana in 2017, we were able to secure a small sustainable funding stream for mental health so we could begin to address this critical issue. With the campaign came public awareness and conversations, and the increased level of the crisis became readily apparent.

We realized we needed to act more quickly; that waiting for sufficient tax revenues was simply unacceptable. In 2018 the Eagle County Commissioners allocated \$500,000 to jump-start the efforts of the Total Health Alliance and make a substantial investment into the development of a mental health system. Other partners have followed suit, and we are making progress on meeting mental health needs. But there's a mountain of work left to do.

Our suicide epidemic is the biggest population health crisis in our modern history. It is affecting our families, our workers, our friends and our neighbors. Eagle County lost 17 people to suicide in 2018—up almost 3 times from 2016. Nearly 1 in 4 local 7th and 8th graders seriously considered suicide in 2017. The Eagle River Valley averages nearly one suicide attempt each day. Sixteen percent of local 7th and 8th graders have made a suicide plan, some in pacts with others.

Over the past 18 months, community groups and key stakeholders have worked to map our mental health system and identify the gaps. We have a strategic road map with 20 identified gaps that will take substantial collaboration, oversight, innovation and funding to address successfully.

We appreciate our partnership with Vail Health. We are asking you to take a bold step with us to address Eagle County's mental health crisis. By creating mental health services as part of the Vail Health campus, together with one-stop shopping for Eagle County health and human services, we have the opportunity to transform the mental health of our entire community. The time is now. With your vision and commitment we can make this a reality.

Thank you for your investments in our communities.

Sincerely,

Jeanne McQueeney

Chair

Kathy Chandler-Henry

Commissioner

Matt Scherr

Commissioner