



# ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATIVE NEWS

ULSTER COUNTY NEWS INFORMATION  
ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATURE  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Ulster County Legislature Calling for the Return and Enhancement of Mental Health Services**

KINGSTON, NY—Ulster County Legislators passed a memorializing resolution calling for the return and enhancement of mental health services that were displaced by the County's response to the COVID 19 pandemic.

In response to a request by Ulster County Executive Patrick Ryan and New York State that Westchester Medical Center/ Health Alliance of Hudson Valley provide surge space for potential COVID-19 patients at their Mary's Avenue campus, the medical center moved their entire mental inpatient care to Dutchess County, displacing both patients and providers. It appears that Health Alliance does not intend to re-establish mental inpatient care in Ulster County

"Moving inpatient care out of Ulster County is hugely problematic, having no clear, public plan to allow our county to prepare is unethical," said Legislator Eve Walter (D-New Paltz), Chairwoman of Law Enforcement, Public Safety Committee and co-sponsor of the resolution.

"When an individual is in crisis, it impacts their family, friends and community," said Legislator Peter Criswell (D-Kingston), Deputy Chair of Public Health and Social Services Committee. "Against the backdrop of the current pandemic, social injustice and the opioid crisis, this is a vital service for our most vulnerable population. These comprehensive mental health services need to be locally accessible within Ulster County."

Minority Leader Ken Ronk, Jr. (R-Shawangunk) feels Westchester Medical Center/Health Alliance has an obligation to bring services back. "We want to see a clear and timely plan to return inpatient mental health services to Ulster County, or inform the County, in writing, of the inability to do so providing fact-based justification."

The resolution also calls upon County Executive Ryan to consult with other private and non-profit mental and behavioral health providers, to explore options to expand mental health services and care in Ulster County.



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“Inpatient care is critical, but we need mental health services outside the hospitals as well,” said David Donaldson, Chairman of the Legislature. “Ulster County once had the most comprehensive metal health services in the State of New York. I would like to see Ulster County return to a model where the this most vulnerable population has access to preventative and outpatient services as well.”

Walter agreed “This problem is symptomatic of the mental health privatization done poorly in our County. We must commit to fixing this and better serve our residents in need.”

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