



## The Commonwealth of Massachusetts General Court

April 29, 2024

Governor Maura Healey and Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll  
24 Beacon Street, Room 280  
Boston, MA 02133

### **RE: Request to Build New Department of Mental Health Psychiatric Hospital**

Dear Governor Healey and Lieutenant Governor Driscoll,

We are writing to you to urge you to file a bond bill to build a new Department of Mental Health (DMH) psychiatric hospital that can hold and treat forensically-involved individuals who have been civilly committed (and require strict security) or criminally sentenced. Our psychiatric hospitals are overburdened by [increasing numbers](#) of patients admitted from the criminal justice system; it is essential that we build a new forensic psychiatric hospital.

The five DMH inpatient psychiatric facilities are ill-equipped to serve the influx of patients admitted from the criminal justice system — of which there has been a [10% increase](#) since 2018. Wait times are long and hospitals are overcrowded - for example Tewksbury Hospital had [more patients than beds in 2023](#). These facilities simply cannot handle the current volume of patients, especially forensic patients and their complex mental health needs.

Providing robust mental health services to forensically-involved individuals is crucial for their medical well-being and for lowering recidivism. Yet the overburdened state of psychiatric hospitals results in a lower standard of care for all patients.

The safety of healthcare professionals in psychiatric hospitals is also a priority. In recent days, staff in the close quarters of psychiatric hospitals have reported receiving violent threats — an unacceptable environment for staff that may also lower the standard of care for patients. A new hospital, designed to serve forensic patients, will help alleviate the burden that current hospitals are under — ensuring the safety of staff and ensuring that patients receive a high level of care.

We are heartened that the General Governmental Bond Bill, Chapter 140 of the Acts of 2022, included a provision for a Department of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) study of options to serve forensically-involved patients in a new therapeutic facility and that the FY24 Capital Investment Plan included funding for this study. We hope the Administration will accelerate the implementation of the DCAMM Study to guide the expenditure of the bond bill.

We thank you for your leadership on criminal justice issues across the Commonwealth and your consideration of this proposal. We look forward to working with your administration.

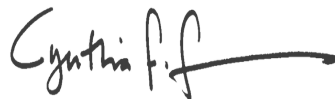
Sincerely,



**James B. Eldridge, Senate Co-Chair**  
State Senator  
Worcester and Middlesex District



**Mary S. Keefe, House Co-Chair**  
State Representative  
15th Worcester District



**Senator Cindy Friedman**  
Fourth Middlesex District



**Representative David LeBoeuf**  
17<sup>th</sup> Worcester District



**Representative Lindsay Sabadosa**  
1st Hampshire District



**Representative Danillo Sena**  
37th Middlesex District



**Representative Christopher Worrell**  
5th Suffolk District



**Representative Ruth Balsler**  
12th Middlesex District

CC:

**Kate Walsh, Secretary**

Executive Office of Health and Human Services

**Terrence Reidy, Secretary**

Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

**Shawn Jenkins, Interim Commissioner**

Department of Corrections

**Brooke Doyle, Commissioner**

Department of Mental Health