



October 10, 2018

Jennifer Bliss
Senior Manager, Office of Consumer Partnerships
Washington State Health Care Authority
blissja@hca.wa.gov

Dear Jennifer,

Beacon Health Options attended several community forums and town halls over the past few months including the June 6, 2018 Consumer Partnerships Town Hall, the August 1, 2018 Town Hall with DSHS Secretary Cheryl Strange, both held in Vancouver and the August 22, 2018 Peer Town Hall held in Wenatchee for North Central Washington.

We sincerely appreciate the opportunity to participate in these community forums. While Beacon leads or participates in various community groups in our regions, these forums attracted a diverse group of individuals which is essential to more fully understanding the breadth of behavioral health needs in our community. The voices of individuals and families as they shared their specific challenges and proposed changes directly to the HCA leadership serves as a powerful reminder of the many opportunities we have to improve behavioral health services in our communities and across the state.

One of the common themes we heard across the regions was the concern over the closure of Western State Hospital for civil beds and the corresponding lack of residential programs within the community. While efforts are underway to remedy this, there is frustration that the transition will be a challenge and individual's needs may not be met. Beacon will continue to work within our communities to identify funding and creative solutions to increase community-based services as well as participate actively in efforts focused on alternative housing in the communities we serve.

Another common theme across regions was the need for more intensive services for children and families and to ensure that those services are seamlessly delivered across providers. Within the rural areas of Southwest and North Central Washington, transportation often exacerbates the situation as families struggle to access services. Beacon will continue to bring providers together to collaborate on delivering crisis services as well as convene the local and regional FYSPRT groups to bring attention to these needs.

Finally, Beacon clearly heard the continued challenge in our state (and across the country) to recruit and retain qualified behavioral health professionals. This need may be particularly intense in the rural areas we serve. Secretary Strange acknowledged this challenge and committed to making a livable wage for behavioral health workers a budget priority at the state level. Beacon fully supports this initiative.

Beacon currently serves as the Behavioral Health – Administrative Services Organization (BH-ASO) for the Southwest and North Central regions and is in the process of transitioning into this role for Pierce County. We look forward to more opportunities to include consumer voice in planning and decisions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Inna Liu".

Inna Liu, LCSW
AVP Account Partnership, Washington