

**GMCB Public Comment****Submit Date:** 3/5/2023**Name:** Ken Libertoff**Topic:** What should GMCB do with UVMMC and mental health plan

**Comment:** Recommendations: The GMCB should stand firm and tall. It has considerable power but only if it uses it. The GMCB should rebuke UVMMC's decision to abandon the CVMC project. In 2017, the Board stated clearly that mental health was the weak link in Vermont's healthcare system. The GMCB should know that the UVMMC estimate of \$150 million for the project in central Vermont was grossly inaccurate. Without penalty or accountability, it took all the "air" out of the project. Even today it is mentioned as a reason for the project's demise. The GMCB should clarify that a 25-bed inpatient psychiatric unit should cost in the range of \$50 to \$60 million. The GMCB should note with displeasure that ten months ago since dropping the Board's highest priority, (improved access to mental healthcare and after four years of planning and expenditures of \$3 million), UVMMC, now, just 10 months later is proposing a CON for a \$130 million outpatient surgery unit in South Burlington. The GMCB should put that request on hold, pending a satisfactory resolution of expanded access to mental healthcare in Vermont. The GMCB should stand tall by stating the obvious. A new outpatient surgery center is a money maker. The same is not true for inpatient psychiatric beds. However, this is a moment for demonstrating healthcare values in our state for the next 25 years. The GMCB should instruct UVMMC to re-start an initiative for more inpatient psychiatric beds in its network, whether at CVMC or an alternative site. If UVMMC cannot accept this challenge, the GMCB should partner with state leaders and service providers in a competitive RFP process for new services, using the \$18 million of leftover funds. The GMCB should reiterate that having mental health patients in E R rooms is a disgrace. The Board might do well to reaffirm that this situation represents a lack of parity - no one would allow access to care barriers if the health condition was cancer or heart disease.

**Post Comment:** Yes