

We are all incredibly troubled and saddened that our long standing hospital Dorothea Dix established in 1849 is moving towards closure. It has been the best of the public psychiatric hospitals. Some of the conflict we believe is around the stress that continues in the system – the understandable frustrations of promises made to build up community before losing inpatient beds as has happened in NC.

But there is not a loss of beds with this change, -- the beds are there, but they are now in a newer hospital a few miles further away. NC is very lucky that allocations have been made to replace our aged, inefficient, and sometimes unsafe public psychiatric facilities. We owe our elected officials a large thank you for taking this action in the face of incredible economic challenges. And we're wise enough to know that there will probably never be enough beds, just as there isn't enough money to ever fund all the community services needed.

There are some silver linings beyond the upcoming construction projects at Broughton and Cherry Hospitals. The funding available to get hospital beds in local community hospitals -- what a visionary idea - - people with brain disorders able to get inpatient care locally! Yet another silver lining is the fact that highly skilled professionals from Dix taking their passion and knowledge to create excellent programs in Cherry and Central hospitals.

Our hospitals are making tremendous strides in things like reduction of seclusion and restraints, addition of rapid response teams to help the most effective staffers help and mentor new staff, medical rounds by administrators in evenings, nights and holidays to ensure the best care possible is delivered, patient engagement in environmental modifications, and similar best practices. We want to move towards our future- having the best possible public psychiatric hospitals in the country. We believe that we are moving in the direction of improved quality through changes in the private provider requirements, through the contracts with local hospitals, and through improvements in our psychiatric hospitals. Let's move the debate towards more solutions like these.

Deby Dihoff
National Alliance on Mental Illness North Carolina