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CITY OF GAINESVILLE  
CITY COMMISSION

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MERIDIAN • BEHAVIORAL • HEALTHCARE • INC .

January 10, 2006

P.O. BOX 141750  
GAINESVILLE  
FLORIDA  
32614 • 1750

Pegeen Hanrahan, Mayor  
City of Gainesville  
PO Box 490 Station 19  
Gainesville, Florida 32601-0490

Dear Mayor Hanrahan:

I am writing on behalf of 5000 Friends of Florida Families. I believe that in a crisis, every family deserves a place to turn. Every day, Meridian's Emergency Services staff receives a call or sees a walk-in whose life has been disrupted by a mental health or substance use problem. I frequently receive calls from parents, spouses, children whose loved one has suddenly started to experience problems thinking clearly, hearing voices, or feeling suicidal.

The anguish these people experience when confronting these crises in a loved one never fails to move me. I am writing because, despite having a large community mental health center and being in close proximity to a University teaching hospital and related facilities, not every family in our area can count on having a place to turn when they need it most.

Why not? Well, Florida ranks 47<sup>th</sup> out of 50 states in funding for mental health care, and 35<sup>th</sup> out of 50 for funding of substance abuse treatment. Being ranked in the bottom of the 50 states is not what I believe Florida families deserve.

I am happy to tell you that it is also not what a majority of Florida voters believe either. This year 5000 Friends of Florida Families polled Florida voters in a public opinion survey about a number of issues. Despite our ranking for funding, the poll found overwhelming support for affordable mental health and addictions treatment among Floridians in all political parties. The majority of voters indicated a belief that the State of Florida has a responsibility to ensure that every family has a place to turn in a crisis; and that every family deserves affordable care.

5000 Friends of Florida Families believes now is the time to reach out directly to voters and fellow citizens in our communities who will let their leaders in Tallahassee know that this is how we feel.

5000 Friends of Florida Families has only one goal: to let elected officials in Tallahassee know that it is time for a major state investment in mental health and addictions treatment. We want to enlist your support for pulling Florida off the bottom 50 so that, in a crisis, every Florida Family has a place to turn.

I would appreciate the opportunity to present this information to the commission in the hopes that, first, each of you will sign on to this pledge:

(352) • 374 • 5600

TTY

1•800•955•8771

Voice

1•800•955•8770

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in Partnership with our Communities

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