

June 27, 2023

Office of the County Executive
George Howard Building
3430 Court House Drive
Ellicott City, MD 21043

Dear County Executive Ball and Members of the Howard County Council,

I enthusiastically submit my application for the Mental Health Board Member position on the Local Children's Board (LCB). As requested, my redacted CV is attached. Upon reviewing my CV, I hope you will find that my professional experiences align with the mission and strategic priorities of the LCB, especially priorities related to health equity. My doctoral training placed a strong emphasis on evidence-based and culturally informed practice; the type of healthcare that often leads to measurable improvement in a child or adolescent's symptoms and daily functioning (while also being time- and cost-effective). In 2012, during my final year of pre-doctoral training in an urban hospital, I became acutely aware of the barriers to high quality healthcare existing in most communities. My service on the child and adolescent inpatient units was especially jarring- most patients were receiving behavioral healthcare for the first time and those who had received prior services were often misdiagnosed or were not receiving evidence-based psychotherapy. (For example, trauma was prevalent among inpatient youth, but often overlooked or ineffectively treated by therapists in the community.) Since then, my career has focused on early identification and connection to evidence-based intervention for ALL youth, especially those in Howard County, where I have lived for nearly 10 years and worked for nearly eight. Below, I highlight select experiences that are particularly relevant to the LCB position.

Integrated primary care is a healthcare model which addresses many barriers to accessing behavioral healthcare. As a primary care psychologist I am contracted with the same insurances as medical providers, so cost is not a barrier to access; patients perceive less stigma (behavioral healthcare is part of their overall wellness experience in the practice); I collaborate closely with the patient's medical provider; I provide brief, but evidence-based interventions for nearly all of the behavioral concerns presenting in the office; I utilize virtual translation services when appropriate; and same-day appointments are typically available with myself or the other psychologist in our practice. Working in a primary care office with approximately 15,000 patients also allows me to maintain a "pulse" on the mental health of Howard County youth, broadly speaking. (I also recognize a subset of residents may not access pediatric primary care and the population of patients in my practice may not be a truly representative sample despite its size.)

In 2019 I extended my work as a primary care psychologist by establishing my small consulting business, Health and Happiness Consulting. I partnered with the Horizon Foundation to assist other pediatric primary care practices with integration. I met with nearly all of the practices in Howard County to provide education on integrated healthcare, conducted financial sustainability assessments for interested practices, and led recruitment and training for those who implemented the model. As of this year, four of the largest pediatric primary care practices in Howard County

employ a behavioral health provider, which means approximately 42,700 youth have access to a behavioral health provider in their pediatrician's office.

Working as an integrated psychologist and consultant provides opportunities to connect with many other stakeholders in Howard County. For approximately one-third of my patients I recommend specialized or more intensive psychotherapy, specialized assessment (e.g., autism or learning evaluations), or psychiatric consultation. To do so effectively, I connect with and maintain a directory of behavioral health providers, currently over 40 pages in length. At least weekly I communicate and collaborate with HCPSS school personnel around patient needs. My role also requires awareness of the wide range of services offered by the county. For example, I have firsthand experience utilizing the Behavioral Health Navigation Service and Local Care Team. I also connect patients with the Office of Children and Families (especially their care line and caregiver workshops), library programs, and programs offered through the Department of Recreation and Parks.

Outside of my consulting role and clinical role as a primary care psychologist I have sought numerous volunteer/service opportunities in Howard County. For example, I have been a member of the Mental Health Community Advisory Committee (MHCAC) since 2018, participating in subgroups to address youth behavioral health needs in our community. I especially enjoyed providing feedback on the Youth Behavioral Health Roadmap at multiple stages of its development. This spring I also had the pleasure of presenting a webinar, *Discussing your child's behavioral health with their primary care provider*, hosted by the Howard County Office of Children and Families.

I am eager to translate my skills into a new service role, contributing to the health equity and overall well-being of our young residents through community assessment, funding decision-making, community engagement, and communication with local and state policymakers. I also look forward to collaborating with stakeholders from a wide range of disciplines and perspectives, both private and public. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions concerning my application. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jessica K. Winkles, Ph.D.
Licensed Psychologist MD #05562
Behavioral Health Consultation Service, Klebanow & Associates
Sole Proprietor, Health and Happiness Consulting
Member, Mental Health Community Advisory Committee