



ORANGE COUNTY MAYOR

## **Jerry L. Demings**

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July 19, 2021

Pete Carrasquillo  
Chief Executive Officer, NeuMind Wellness Group  
Via Email: [pcarrasquillo@neumind.com](mailto:pcarrasquillo@neumind.com)

Dear Mr. Carrasquillo:

I would like to request your participation in a Mental and Behavioral Health System of Care Community Analysis sponsored by Orange County Government and administered by the Heart of Florida United Way. You were selected for this initiative because of your expertise in the area of mental and behavioral health or as a representative of a key stakeholder involved in treatment, advocacy, funding, or the criminal justice system.

In May, I convened a group of thought leaders to begin the dialogue on improving the mental and behavioral health system of care in our community. The current system is already overburdened, and recent research suggests the situation will be exacerbated due to the impact of COVID-19 on mental health.

Orange County has seen an unprecedented increase amongst residents in distress with prescriptions, insurance claims, suicides, hospitalizations, and interactions with law enforcement. I believe the time to act is now and come together as a community to improve our continuum of care and increase access to prevention programs, treatment, and transitional housing.

On May 18, the Orange County Board of County Commission (BCC) unanimously approved the Heart of Florida United Way to lead the evaluation and work with our community stakeholders by examining gaps in the system, identifying needed resources and funding, evaluating best practices, and recommending improvements. The Heart of Florida United Way was selected because they are not a social services provider; however, they understand the social service system, the community provider network, stakeholders, and funding streams in Orange County.

The system of care analysis will be accomplished through five committees to include: 1) Continuum of Care; 2) Advocacy; 3) Business Community; 4) Criminal Justice; and 5) Homelessness and Housing. The purpose of the committees is to receive stakeholder input on the allocation and adequacy of behavioral health services and programs and provide recommendations to increase and enhance service delivery. The committees will also focus on funding needs and prioritization of funding. United Way will develop a community plan based on stakeholder input, community focus groups, and a comprehensive review of best practices and literature. We anticipate completing the analysis by the first quarter of 2022.

United Way will schedule committee meetings the beginning of August and continue through the first week of October. Please see attached the list of committee assignments for your review. United Way will provide you with further details on the scope of the committees and the meeting schedule.

It is my hope that you will agree to participate in this important initiative. It will take a collaborative approach engaging our hospitals, service providers, businesses, charitable foundations, local jurisdictions, criminal justice partners, and consumers to develop an executable plan to improve our system of care. With your participation, we can make a difference in the lives of those facing mental health and behavioral health issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jerry L. Demings". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "D".

Jerry L. Demings  
Orange County Mayor

Attachment

- c: Roseann Harrington, Chief of Staff to Mayor Jerry L. Demings
- Carol Burkett, Deputy Chief of Staff to Mayor Jerry L. Demings
- Darren Gray, Deputy County Administrator, County Administration
- Carla Bell Johnson, Assistant County Administrator, County Administration
- Lonnie Bell, Director, Community & Family Services Department
- Donna Wyche, Manager, Mental Health & Homelessness Division
- Cristina Berrios, Assistant County Attorney, County Attorney's Office
- Jeff Hayward, President & CEO, Heart of Florida United Way