

Submitted by
to the
Cambridge City Council
by the
Neighborhood Health Station Crisis Coalition

March 5, 1973

WHEREAS, it is clear that the continuing decline in the number of private physicians with practices serving the low-income neighborhoods of Cambridge has created a crisis in the availability of adequate medical care for residents of these neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility of the City government through the Department of Health and Hospitals, to take all necessary steps to resolve this crisis; and

WHEREAS, the Cambridge Hospital made a specific commitment in May of 1971 to accomplish this through the development of a Neighborhood Health Stations Program; and

WHEREAS, this commitment has been reaffirmed as recently as December, 1972; and

WHEREAS, the demonstrated effectiveness of the Neighborhood Health Station Program as a health care delivery system is clearly evident;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Cambridge City Council hereby declares that it is the public policy of the City of Cambridge to guarantee the availability and accessibility of medical care to the residents of the low-income neighborhoods of Cambridge by maintaining and supporting a Neighborhood Health Station Program; and further,

BE IT RESOLVED that pursuant to this policy the City Manager is hereby ordered to provide within the Cambridge Hospital budget for the fiscal year 1973-74, sufficient funds to insure the operation of ~~five~~ ^{SIX} Neighborhood Health Stations, adequately staffed with a minimum of a Nurse-Practitioner, Medical Receptionist and Health Aide, available on a full-time basis within each Health Station, serving the neighborhoods of East Cambridge, Donnelly Field, Area 4, Cambridgeport, Riverside, and North Cambridge, & Clarendon Ave.

NEIGHBORHOOD HEALTH STATION CRISIS COALITION

STATEMENT
TO THE

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

MARCH 5, 1973

MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL:

IN BEHALF OF THE 22 COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS WHO ARE AFFILIATED WITH THE NEIGHBORHOOD HEALTH STATION CRISIS COALITION I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A FEW REMARKS.

WE ARE HERE TONIGHT TO ASK YOUR SUPPORT FOR A PROGRAM THAT IS VITAL TO THE HEALTH AND WELL BEING OF THOUSANDS OF CAMBRIDGE RESIDENTS. THERE IS A REAL DANGER THAT UNLESS THE CITY COUNCIL ACTS NOW THE SERVICES THAT ARE AVAILABLE THROUGH THE NEIGHBORHOOD HEALTH STATION PROGRAM WILL BE DRASTICLY REDUCED. SHOULD THAT HAPPEN IT MEANS THAT THOUSANDS OF RESIDENTS OF THE LOWER INCOME NEIGHBORHOODS OF CAMBRIDGE WILL FIND THAT THE HEALTH CARE WHICH THEY MUST HAVE IS NO LONGER EASILY AVAILABLE OR ACCESSIBLE TO THEM. WE DO NOT THINK THAT THE CITY OF CAMBRIDGE SHOULD WITHDRAW ITS SUPPORT FOR A PROGRAM THAT PROVIDES THIS BASIC NECESSITY.

DURING THE PAST TWO MONTHS YOU HAVE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME FAMILIAR THE PURPOSES OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD HEALTH STATION PROGRAM, AND THE SERVICES THAT ARE OFFERED THROUGH IT. I WOULD LIKE TO BRIEFLY SUMMARIZE THE HISTORY OF THE PROGRAM AND THE REASONS WHY WE ARE ADVOCATING THAT IT BE CONTINUED AND EXPANDED.

IT HAS BEEN APPARENT FOR YEARS THAT THE LEVEL OF HEALTH CARE IN THE NEIGHBORHOODS OF EAST CAMBRIDGE, DONNELLY FIELD, AREA 4, CAMBRIDGEPORT, RIVERSIDE AND NORTH CAMBRIDGE HAS STEADILY DECLINED. PRIVATE PHYSICIANS WHO MAINTAINED FAMILY PRACTICES IN THESE NEIGHBORHOODS HAVE RETIRED AND HAVE NOT BEEN REPLACED. THERE ARE NOW ONLY SEVEN FAMILY PRACTITIONERS WHOSE AVERAGE AGE IS IN

THE MID SIXTIES SERVING THESE AREAS WITH A POPULATION OF 50,000 PEOPLE. AT THE PRESENT TIME THERE IS ONE FAMILY PRACTITIONER FOR EVERY 700 RESIDENTS IN THE UPPER INCOME AREAS OF CAMBRIDGE YET IN THE LOWER INCOME NEIGHBORHOODS THERE IS ONLY ONE PRACTITIONER FOR EVERY 7,000 RESIDENTS. RESIDENTS OF THESE NEIGHBORHOODS WHO IN YEARS PAST RELIED ON THEIR FAMILY DOCTOR FOR THEIR MEDICAL CARE HAVE HAD TO TURN TO CLINICS AND EMERGENCY WARDS. AS THOSE OF US WHO HAVE USED HOSPITAL EMERGENCY WARDS FOR OUT PATIENT CARE KNOW, TOO WELL, THESE FACILITIES ARE NOT ADEQUATE TO MEET THIS NEED. THE SETTING CAN BE HECTIC WHILE YOU SIT AND WAIT FOR HOURS TO SEE SOMEONE. MEDICAL HISTORIES ARE OFTEN UNAVAILABLE. THE FACES OF THE MEDICAL PERSONNEL SERVING YOU CONTINUALLY CHANGE. AN EMERGENCY WARD IS A GOOD PLACE FOR EMERGENCY CARE IT IS NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR A FAMILY DOCTOR.

TWO YEARS AGO CAMBRIDGE HOSPITAL CONCEIVED OF THE HEALTH STATION PROGRAM AS AN ANSWER TO THIS STEADILY WORSENING PROBLEM. THE HEALTH STATIONS WERE TO BE NEIGHBORHOOD CLINICS OFFERING OUT PATIENT CARE TO CAMBRIDGE RESIDENTS WHO NO LONGER HAD PRIVATE PHYSICIANS. THEY WOULD OFFER THIS CARE IN A SETTING THAT WAS EFFICIENT, ATTRACTIVE PERSONEL AND EASILY ACCESSIBLE. THEY WERE NEVER INTENDED TO BE A LUXURY AND NOW THEY ARE AN ABSOLUTE NECESSITY.

SINCE JUNE OF LAST YEAR THREE HEALTH STATIONS LOCATED AT THE FITZGERALD SCHOOL IN NORTH CAMBRIDGE, THE FAMILY CARE CENTER IN AREA 4 AND 781 CAMBRIDGE ST. SERVING EAST CAMBRIDGE AND DONNELLY FIELD HAVE BEEN OPEN TO OFFER ADULT MEDICAL SERVICES TO RESIDENTS OF THESE COMMUNITIES. IN THAT TIME OVER 1000 PATIENTS HAVE USED THEM AT LEAST ONCE. WE ESTIMATE THAT 5 HEALTH STATIONS OPEN FULL TIME WITH SOME EVENING CLINIC HOURS WOULD SERVE 11,000 PATIENTS DURING THE COURSE OF A YEAR.

THOSE OF YOU ON THE COUNCIL WHO HAVE VISITED THESE FACILITIES KNOW THAT EACH OF THEM IS STAFFED BY A NURSE PRACTITIONER, WHO IS THE PERSON WITH PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE TREATMENT OF ALL PATIENTS; A MEDICAL RECEPTIONIST, WHO SCHEDULES APPOINTMENTS, INTERVIEWS, PATIENTS AND KEEPS MEDICAL RECORDS; AND A HEALTH AIDE, WHO DOES OUTREACH, HOME VISITING, ASSISTS THE NURSE AND PROVIDES TRANSLATION WHERE NECESSARY. A PHYSICIAN IS ALWAYS ON CALL AT CAMBRIDGE HOSPITAL TO CONSULT WITH THE NURSE SHOULD IT BE NECESSARY. THE CONTINUED GROWTH OF THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE USING THIS PROGRAM IS THE BEST EVIDENCE WE CAN OFFER OF ITS SUCCESS. WE HAD THOUGHT THAT THIS FACT ALONE WOULD BE SUFFICIENT TO PERSUADE THE CITY TO CONTINUE AND EXPAND THE PROGRAM.

WE BELIEVE THAT THE CITY SHOULD COMMIT SUFFICIENT FUNDS TO THIS PROGRAM TO INSURE THAT THE LEVEL OF SERVICES OFFERED IN THE HEALTH STATIONS NOW OPEN IS MAINTAINED AND THAT TWO NEW ONES ARE DEVELOPED, ONE SERVING RIVERSIDE LOCATED AT THE COMMUNITY CENTER AND THE OTHER SERVING CAMBRIDGEPORT LOCATED IN THE ERIE-HAMILTON ST. ELDERLY HOUSING. WE HAVE PROPOSED THAT THIS BE ACCOMPLISHED BY CITY FUNDING OF THE NURSE PRACTITIONER, MEDICAL RECEPTIONIST AND HEALTH AIDE POSITIONS IN THE PROGRAM. IF THE CITY WERE TO GUARANTEE THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THESE THREE POSITIONS, THE FEDERAL FUNDS THAT ARE AVAILABLE THROUGH CEOC COULD BE APPLIED TO SUPPORT THE REMAINING COSTS OF THE PROGRAM.

SOME IMPORTANT BENEFITS OF THIS PROPOSAL ARE WORTH EMPHASIZING. IT WILL GUARANTEE THE CONTINUITY OF SERVICES SHOULD FEDERAL FUNDING IN FUTURE YEARS BE REDUCED. IT WILL PROVIDE A SUFFICIENT NUMBER OF HEALTH STATIONS SO THAT TWO OF THEM COULD BE LOCATED IN THE CLINIC FACILITIES THAT ARE BEING BUILT IN THE ELDERLY TURNKEY HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS AT GORE ST. AND AT ERIE-HAMILTON ST.. THIS PLACES FULL TIME HEALTH CARE AT THE DOORSTEP OF HUNDREDS OF LOW INCOME ELDERLY

who are heavy users of this service. IT WILL ESTABLISH AN ALTERNATIVE SYSTEM OF HEALTH CARE IN EACH OF THOSE NEIGHBORHOODS THAT ARE MOST SERIOUSLY AFFECTED BY THE SHORTAGE OF PRIVATE PHYSICIANS.

WE BELIEVE THAT THE ACTUAL COST TO THE CITY IF IT WERE TO IMPLEMENT THIS PROPOSAL WOULD IN FACT BE VERY SMALL. AS YOU KNOW THE TOTAL COST OF THE PROGRAM FOR TWELVE MONTHS IS \$206,000. WE ARE ASSURED THAT \$70,000 IN FEDERAL FUNDS WILL BE AVAILABLE THIS YEAR FROM CEOC TO SUPPORT THE PROGRAM. THIS REDUCES THE AMOUNT THE CITY MUST BUDGET FOR TO \$135,000. OF THIS SUM WE ESTIMATE THAT THE CITY WILL BE REIMBURSED IN THE AMOUNT OF \$100,000 BY THIRD PARTY INSURERS FOR SERVICES RENDERED IN THE HEALTH STATIONS.. THIS REDUCES THE NET COST IN CITY FUNDS FOR A FIVE CENTER HEALTH STATION PROGRAM TO \$35,000. WITH THIS RELATIVELY SMALL SUM INVOLVED AND WITH THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAM CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED, IT WAS OUR HOPE THAT THE CITY WOULD FUND THE PROGRAM AT AN ADEQUATE LEVEL. UNFORTUNATELY THIS HAS NOT HAPPENED.

THE BUDGET PREPARED BY THE CITY MANAGER ONLY INCLUDES FUNDS FOR SIX NURSE PRACTITIONER POSITIONS. IF THE BUDGET IS NOT INCREASED THE EFFECTS ON THE PROGRAM WILL BE DISASTEROUS. THE CITY BUDGET AS IT NOW STANDS ELIMINATES THE PROSPECT OF A FIFTH HEALTH STATION. IT WILL LEAD TO IMMEDIATE REDUCTIONS IN THE LEVEL OF SERVICES OFFERED IN THE REMAINING HEALTH STATIONS. IT JEOPARDIZES THE ABILITY OF THE PROGRAM TO LOCATE SERVICES IN THE ELDERLY CLINIC FACILITIES AT ERIE ST., RAISING THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE ELDERLY RESIDENTS OF THIS BUILDING WILL BE WITHOUT HEALTH CARE. IN THE LONG TERM THE CITY BUDGET THREATENS THE SURVIVAL OF THE HEALTH STATION PROGRAM ITSELF. A HEALTH STATION THAT IS STAFFED BY A NURSE PRACTITIONER ALONE WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR EVERY ASPECT OF ITS OPERATION, IS A SECOND CLASS SYSTEM OF MEDICAL CARE THAT WILL NOT WORK. THE RESIDENTS OF THIS CITY'S LOW INCOME NEIGHBORHOODS WHO HAVE NO OTHER WAY TO

171 Allston St
Cambridge Mass

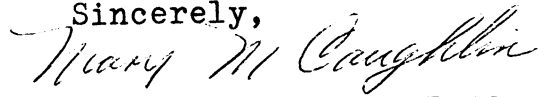
TO: City Manager
John H. Corcoran

The "Cambridgeport Residents' Union" wishes to make known to you and the City Council its approval for a *Neighborhood Health Station in our area.

We are hoping that you the City Manager and the City Council will provide and approve the necessary funds to see that such a station will be properly staffed and put into operation as soon as possible.

It is our belief that the various health needs of the adult community can be dealt with more effectively through such a center.

Sincerely,



MARY M. COUGHLIN, PRES.
CAMBRIDGEPORT RESIDENTS'
UNION

Wellington-Harrington Citizens Committee
920 Cambridge Street
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02141

March 2, 1973

Mr. John Corcoran
City Manager
Cambridge City Hall
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Dear Mr. Corcoran:

As you know, the Wellington-Harrington Citizens Committee has been concerned for a number of years with upgrading the quality of life in our neighborhood and with supporting programs which contribute towards that end.

One program which has made a positive impact in our community and which we feel deserves the support of the City is the Neighborhood Health Station Program. Through this program, high quality health care services have been provided within our own neighborhood to people who might otherwise have avoided seeking professional help because of the expense of a private physician or the difficulty in utilizing the overworked facilities at the Cambridge Hospital. This is especially true of our elderly citizens who often will not travel out of the immediate neighborhood for services they need.

The Wellington-Harrington Citizens Committee feels that the Neighborhood Health Station Program has been meeting a serious need in our community and requests that the City give its full support to the Program so that it can continue its services.

Sincerely,

Robert W. Bright
Chairman

RWB:amo

cc: ✓ Ms. Doris Aubrey
Chairman
Neighborhood Health Station Crisis Coalition

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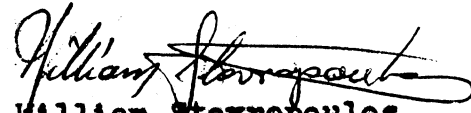
CAMBRIDGE, MASS

Cambridge City Council
City Hall
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Gentlemen:

We are indeed happy to inform you that the Ward 5
Democratic Committee unanimously and enthusiastically
endorsed your decision to establish a Neighborhood
Health Station Program in our area and assure you
we will make every effort to support it.

Very truly yours,


William Stavropoulos,
Secretary, Ward 5 Democratic
Committee

65 Henry Street
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139
Tel. 876-8199

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March 12, 1973