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March 20, 2023

Media Contact: press@mmhpi.org

**Meadows Institute President/CEO Testifies on Need for Mental
Health and Brain Research Institute of Texas
*HB 15/HJR 135***

AUSTIN, Texas – Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute President and CEO Andy Keller, PhD, today gave invited testimony before the Texas House Higher Education Committee on the importance of legislation to create the Mental Health and Brain Research Institute of Texas. Championed by Representatives Senfronia Thompson and Tom Craddick, HB15 and HJR 135 would invest \$3 billion over ten years to expedite innovative research to prevent, treat, and cure mental health and brain-related diseases and disorders, positioning Texas to be the national leader in mental health and brain research.

“It’s exciting to think of what this bill represents,” Keller said. “Our mission is for Texas to be the best and being able to offer people state-of-the-art mental healthcare. This bill today I would argue is more important than any other piece of legislation you’ve ever looked at for making that the case.”

The establishment of the research institute would demonstrate a sustained commitment to brain health and attract world-class researchers and their teams to Texas, providing an opportunity to recruit, develop, and train leading professionals to help address our healthcare workforce crisis. Its cutting-edge research would also make the latest in trials and treatments available to Texas patients, while attracting public and private-sector investment to build an ecosystem of innovation across the state.

Brain health includes conditions ranging from traumatic brain injury and stroke to chronic traumatic encephalopathy and Alzheimer’s disease. Finding treatments and cures for neurodegenerative diseases is a race against time, as the number of the state’s population 65-years old and up with Alzheimer’s will increase 22.5% by 2025, reaching 490,000 Texans.

“To lead the nation and the world in mental health and brain health innovation, we must have the gravity of researchers, the gravity of research, the gravity of opportunity, the gravity of collaboration,” Keller said. “Texas has created that for cancer research with CPRIT. We can and should do the same for for the brain.”

Keller's testimony emphasized the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT) as a model of success that demonstrates sustained commitment to funding world-leading research both attracts researchers and grows the clinical workforce.

Since CPRIT was established:

- 288 cancer researchers and their labs have moved to Texas, including 2018 Nobel Prize winner Jim Allison;
 - Over 7,840 permanent jobs have been created; and
 - 52 companies started, expanded, or relocated to Texas with investment totaling \$580 million.

CPRIT has expedited innovation breakthroughs for Texans:

- Texas has achieved three NCI-Designated Cancer Centers. Previously, only MD Anderson Cancer Center held this designation. These Centers:
 - Deliver cutting-edge cancer treatments to patients; and
 - Are recognized for their scientific leadership in laboratory and clinical research, in addition to integrating training and education for biomedical researchers and health care professionals.
- As a result, 46,442 patients have participated in 263 clinical trials or studies, statewide.

The Mental Health and Brain Research Institute of Texas will drive more public and private sector investment to Texas:

- Texas needs to stake its claim as the global leader in mental health and brain research. This has the potential to tap into billions of dollars in investments beyond the amount invested in grants.
- In FY 2022, the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) granted approximately \$2.2 billion dollars, which is less than 5% of the total budget (\$45.2 billion) for the NIH.
- During that year, Texas grantees received a total of \$62 million from NIMH, representing less than 3% of federal mental health research dollars.
- Although Texas is the nation's second largest state, boasting 9% of the United States population, this funding does not reflect a proportionate distribution of resources and benefit for the people of Texas.
- Meanwhile, CPRIT-funded academic research grantees and companies raised over \$9 billion in follow-on funds, exceeding CPRIT-funded awards by \$6.10 billion.
- Economic interest in mental health is growing, with venture capital investments in mental health totaling \$4.82 billion in 2021.

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About Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute

Launched in 2014, the Meadows Institute helps Texas legislators, state officials, members of the judiciary, and local, state, and national leaders identify equitable systemic solutions to mental health needs and has become Texas's most trusted source for data-driven mental health policy. The Meadows Institute is making a significant impact in multiple areas, helping Texas and national leaders shift the focus of new investments toward early intervention, addressing the mental health crisis in our jails and emergency rooms, and helping all people with mental health needs recover and be well. Learn more at mmhpi.org.

MEADOWS MENTAL HEALTH POLICY INSTITUTE

T (972) 884-4660

3003 Swiss Avenue, Dallas, Texas 75204

mmhpi.org