



Date: December 13, 2024

RE: UWL Prairie Springs

Dear members of the Joint Finance Committee,

On behalf of Mayo Clinic Health System, we write in support of funding for the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse Prairie Springs Science Center Completion and Cowley Hall Demolition Project. Our region remains grateful for the state's Phase I investment in the science center. The resulting facility has been transforming health and science education since it opened in 2018.

Mayo Clinic Health System employs more than 8,000 people in Wisconsin. With a tight labor market, we have been challenged to recruit staff for important patient care roles, and we anticipate a growing shortage of healthcare workers across the state over the next decade. Providing high-quality patient care requires an adequate supply of well-trained staff.

To support healthcare education and further healthcare knowledge, we entered into a research agreement with UW-La Crosse in November 2019. This shared partnership brings UW-La Crosse students and faculty together with Mayo professionals to conduct research. For example, collaborative efforts have focused on innovative healthcare solutions that directly benefit patients in our region. The partnership was inspired by the Prairie Springs Science Center, and the completion of this project is vital to realizing its full potential.

The Prairie Springs Science Center Completion will replace the aging Cowley Hall, a 60-year-old structure that cannot be renovated to accommodate the collaborative, student-centered, and technology-rich environment necessary for scientific study today. Modern infrastructure is crucial to ensure students receive the education necessary to fill critical roles in healthcare and science. Completion of the science center will allow for program growth, greater collaboration, and expanded lab and research facilities, fostering innovation that extends benefits to the broader community, including improved health outcomes and educational outreach initiatives.

The economic benefits of this investment cannot be overstated. A fully completed Prairie Springs Science Center will help sustain Wisconsin's workforce by producing well-educated graduates ready to meet the growing demands of employers like Mayo Clinic Health System. Moreover, it will attract talented students and researchers, ensuring the state remains competitive in the global marketplace.

For these reasons, we urge you to prioritize funding for the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse Prairie Springs Science Center Completion and Cowley Hall Demolition Project in the upcoming budget process. This project is an investment in Wisconsin's future, fostering innovation, education, and economic vitality for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Dr. Richard Helmers

Vice President, Mayo Clinic Health System - Wisconsin

Dr. Scott Okuno

Lead Site Physician, Mayo Clinic Health System - Southwest Wisconsin

700 West Avenue South | La Crosse | Wisconsin 54601