



Black Psychiatrists of America, Inc.

Dr. Kevin Smith  
President & CEO  
University Health Network  
200 Elizabeth Street  
Toronto, ON M5G 2C4

1629 K. Street, NW #300  
Washington, DC 20006  
info@blackpsychs.org  
www.blackpsychs.org

**Re: Urgent Support for the Restoration of the Asian Initiative in Mental Health (AIM) and Protection of Culturally Focused Mental Health Services**

Dear Dr. Smith,

I am writing to express my deep concern over the recent dissolution of the Asian Initiative in Mental Health (AIM) program at University Health Network (UHN). As a Black psychiatrist committed to equity, justice, and the elimination of mental health disparities among historically marginalized communities, I am gravely troubled by the implications of this decision for both the Asian Canadian communities and the broader implications on equity-informed care throughout your system.

Since November 2023, I have been privileged to lead the Black Psychiatrists of America, Inc., founded in 1969. We are psychiatrists who advocate for the mental health of people of African descent and understand how our interests intersect with all underserved populations around the world. AIM has long served as a model of culturally competent care, meeting the unique linguistic, social, and cultural needs of Chinese and Asian Canadian communities in the Greater Toronto Area. Its abrupt closure—without adequate consultation with patients, families, or community partners—not only disrupts continuity of care but also erodes trust, undermines community partnerships, and eliminates a vital training ground for culturally responsive mental health professionals. The impact of closure is particularly troubling given the history of Chinese Canadians experiencing the lowest mental health service utilization and highest unmet needs among ethnic groups in Ontario.

I am especially alarmed by the broader context in which this decision occurs: this is a time when diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives are increasingly under attack in the United States and would hate to see similar efforts occur in Canada, derailing efforts to eliminate mental health disparities. The closure of AIM, under the rationale of centralizing services and standardizing care, risks perpetuating the very forms of structural racism and erasure that DEI principles aim to rectify. Centralized, homogenized systems fail to serve those who do not fit the majority mold. I urge UHN to reflect deeply on the colonial legacy of “one-size-fits-all” approaches to services and their disproportionate harms on racialized populations.

I ask UHN to immediately restore the AIM program as a dedicated, culturally specific mental health service, reaffirm its commitment to DEI in action by protecting and resourcing culturally grounded programs serving racialized communities, and engage in meaningful dialogue with affected communities and their advocates to co-design a sustainable model of culturally competent mental health care.

I am happy to assist you in this urgent work in any way that I can.

Respectfully,

Stephen McLeod-Bryant, MD  
President

**BPA MISSION**

The mission of the BPA is to address issues affecting the Mental Health of African-Americans and to provide a forum for continuing education for those who provide psychiatric care.

BLACK PSYCHIATRISTS OF AMERICA