

Dr. Kevin Smith,
President and CEO
University Health Network (UHN)
190 Elizabeth St
Toronto, ON M5G 2C4

August 14, 2025

Re: Urgent Call to Reinstate the Asian Initiative in Mental Health (AIM) Program

Dear Dr. Smith

We are writing to express our deep concern at the sudden closure of the Asian Initiative in Mental Health (AIM) Program at Toronto Western Hospital.

OCASI - Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants is the umbrella organization of Ontario's immigrant and refugee-serving sector. We represent over 250 sector organizations across Ontario. OCASI is committed to equity and social justice, and works to ensure immigrants and refugees have access to the services that they need and the opportunity to participate fully and equitably in Canadian society. It is that concern that drives us to write to you today and respectfully ask you to reconsider UHN's recent decision to close the Asian Initiative in Mental Health program (AIM).

We understand deeply the systemic inequities facing our migrant populations. Everyday, our member agencies work on the front lines serving newcomers who face profound barriers that prevent them from finding housing, securing a job, being able to feed their families with adequate nutrition, access health care, and other elements of daily living that many of us take for granted. These struggles are often further compounded by struggles of mental health. Many suffer in silence and isolation due to cultural stigma surrounding mental illness particularly among Asian communities, and lack of access to culturally and linguistically appropriate mental health resources.

For over 20 years, for those in the Asian communities living with mental health issues, AIM was a rare oasis in a desert landscape devoid of meaningful help and resources. It was a safe and trusted space where clients can access support, diagnosis and treatment, all provided in a manner that was culturally sensitive and language appropriate. It served tens of thousands of

individuals who would not otherwise have received treatment. It provided care for the clients, and more importantly, hope for their families and loved ones who had no other options.

The decision to close AIM was made without warning nor consultation with stakeholders, community members or clients. More dishearteningly, it was carried out during a time when social equity efforts are being ridiculed, challenged and dismantled across North America, all in the name of “efficiencies” or “standardization”. We urge you to consider the impact and message this decision sends especially in the current political and social climate. “Efficiencies” and “Compassion” do not need to be antithetical. “Standardization” and “Justice” are not synonymous.

Reversing this decision will demonstrate UHN’s commitment to equity and inclusion. OCASI stands ready to support this work and welcome opportunities to discuss how we can meaningfully contribute in further dialogue to make mental health supports accessible to all.

Yours truly,



Debbie Douglas
Executive Director



Alfred Lam
President