



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

April 4, 2016

Kurt Barwis, President
Bristol Hospital
41 Brewster Road
Bristol, CT 06010

Dear President Barwis:

I read with interest the Courant's latest coverage of your medical office expansion project in downtown Bristol last week. According to that story, and previous coverage of the issue in the Courant and the Bristol Press, the viability of this project had been threatened by proposed reductions in supplemental payments by the state under the Medicaid program.

And yet, according to the Connecticut Hospital Association's public statements, state policy is "taking nearly every dime hospitals have." (CHA press release, 10/6/15) Based on the hundreds of identical e-mails I have received from Bristol Hospital partisans, state funding was intended to avoid "a devastating effect on our patients and families as well as the more than 1600 Bristol Hospital employees who are dedicated to providing safe and high-quality patient care." The email continued with the plea: "Please don't allow the health of our community to be compromised and the access to care dissolved." Even the CHA, in its October 1 letter to Commissioner Bremby which you signed, conceded that "hospitals depend on these (supplemental) funds to support the provision of services to individuals enrolled in Medicaid seeking hospital care."

Apparently not. The obvious conclusion is that Bristol Hospital is using state government money in the form of Medicaid supplemental payments to finance construction of new facility expansions. I would have hoped that the hospital industry in Connecticut could have avoided the abuses found by the federal GAO review of supplemental payments (GAO 16-108, February 2016). That review criticized "extremely large supplemental payments that resulted in total Medicaid payments well in excess of Medicaid costs and allowed for significant hospital spending on equipment, construction projects, and services not directly related to Medicaid."

A new outpatient facility is not needed to ensure access or quality of care. It is hard to imagine a region better equipped with medical facilities than Hartford's western suburbs, with hospitals and outpatient facilities in Bristol, Farmington, New Britain, and Waterbury, not to mention Hartford's three hospitals.

When I visited Bristol Hospital's website in search of more information about how construction of new specialist offices and outpatient facilities was critical to patient health and access to care in Bristol, I was startled to see that the hospital is hiring and has over 100 open recruitments for new staff.

President Barwis, I have led organizations through financial difficulties. I am doing so now, preparing plans to curtail services, lay off staff, and renegotiate pension and benefit agreements. I had assumed from the dire tone of the e-mails, the television ads, and your frequent public statements, that Bristol

Hospital would be going through the same gut-wrenching process. Instead, I learn, you are hiring, building and expanding with taxpayer money while the state of Connecticut is making difficult choices about cutting services and laying off state employees.

In order for me to understand this development and how it is so integral to community health, would you kindly provide me with details regarding the use of public funds in the development of this new facility?

Since your hospital is largely being financed with taxpayer dollars, I would like to ensure that your earlier pleas for those dollars were based on the full fiscal reality that your organization was facing and not just part of a public relations campaign to obtain more taxpayer funded expansions of your hospital. I believe that the public deserves a full disclosure of all public support in this real estate development project.

Thank you.

Kind Regards,



Ben Barnes, Secretary
Office of Policy and Management

cc:

Honorable Martin M. Looney
Honorable Bob Duff
Honorable Len Fasano
Honorable Brendan Sharkey
Honorable Joe Aresimowicz
Honorable Themis Klarides