



J. GARY PRETLOW
Assemblyman 89th District

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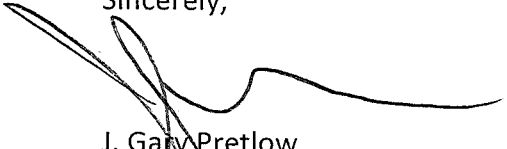
March 18, 2020

To concerned New Yorkers,

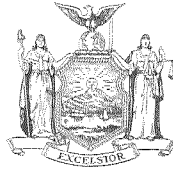
In coordination with Governor Cuomo's outreach for emergency hospital rooms. I respectfully request that Montefiore Health Care Systems accept my attached letter requesting a formal stay or rethinking in its plan to close Mount Vernon Hospital.

Mount Vernon like the rest of New York State and the country face this unprecedented public health crisis. As the 8th most densely populated city in the United States with the most vulnerable underserved community in Westchester County, it is imperative that the decision to close Mount Vernon Hospital be reversed.

Sincerely,



J. Gary Pretlow
Assemblyman, 89th District



NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE WESTCHESTER DELEGATION

March 18, 2020

Governor Cuomo
Howard Zucker
Paul Francis
Michael Dowling

The City of Mount Vernon is facing an unprecedented public health crisis. Montefiore Health Care Systems is the only hospital in the City. It has virtually abandoned the community - providing no plan on how it will deal with the spread of the novel Coronavirus in the 8th most densely populated city in the United States - a medically underserved community - with the most vulnerable population in Westchester County.

We call on the management Montefiore to place the public health above its profit motives in dealing with the Coronavirus pandemic. Amid this dangerous pandemic and the scramble for hospital beds, Mount Vernon Hospital's 150 beds, its ICU unit, its emergency room all lay dormant and deactivated by Montefiore, as part of its profit-making scheme to permanently close the only full-service hospital in the City. Here are some of the dormant and wasted resources sitting at Mount Vernon Hospital:

- **Ebola Room:** This room is located directly off the waiting room. It is a negative pressure room with a stored HEPA filter in the ceiling.
- **Triage Room:** this large space can be utilized for quarantine while patients are being tested.
- **Fourth Floor:** fitting the entire floor with negative pressure to prevent cross contamination.
- Floors and locations for potential beds and bed counts:
 - 2nd floor (2 Tower): 40 beds (medical surgical);
 - 6th floor (6 Tower): 40 beds;
 - 6th floor (6 West): 35 beds (once telemetry/pediatric unit);
 - 5th floor (5 West): 35 beds

We wish to impress upon Montefiore that patient-care (not profit) should be the number one priority.

The need for more hospital beds in New York and the region is palpable. New York State has the most cases of Coronavirus infections in the United States and the numbers of cases are spiking each day, both because the virus is spreading and because of more testing. With the exponential growth of predictable new cases in New York, the question is whether we will have sufficient hospital beds, intensive care units, health care workers and ventilators to treat patients caught in the pandemic.

Governor Andrew Cuomo warned that New York is facing devastating effects of the pandemic and hospitals may need to halt all elective surgeries and recall former doctors and nurses to handle a surge in novel Coronavirus patients. The Governor addressed the desperate shortage in hospital beds. He called on the federal government to provide urgent assistance in increasing capacity, warning that the current trajectory of new cases shows the system is about to be overwhelmed. However, the state is not waiting on the federal government to move on creating extra beds, the Governor announced that the state would mobilize the National Guard to work with building unions and private developers to find existing facilities that can be easily adapted to become medical facilities. The Governor also called on local governments to help the state identify places in their areas that could easily be converted.

We are identifying Mount Vernon Hospital as a facility that should be staffed up and ready to house patients. As the Governor warned, the current trajectory of new cases reveals that the system is about to be overwhelmed. This letter is a warning to Montefiore and public officials that the failure to act in Mount Vernon could result in substantial negative impacts to residents from Coronavirus, given the documented health vulnerabilities of a substantial aging population and the limited medical resources in this community. This warning is particularly critical because Westchester County has the second highest number of cases in the state. Mount Vernon's neighboring city, New Rochelle, was thrust into the national spotlight when it became an early hot spot of positive cases of Coronavirus, leading New York State to establish a "containment area" in that city and calling in the National Guard to assist residents. So, it might not be a matter of if, but when, the Coronavirus spreads more rapidly in the densely populated Mount Vernon community.

We demand the immediate restoration of a fully functioning and fully staffed hospital and that Montefiore restore the vital services depleted from Mount Vernon Hospital without regards to the negative impacts on this community. Montefiore systematically removed medical services and resources from Mount Vernon Hospital, leaving residents without a functional hospital in the midst of a global pandemic. Montefiore's conduct placed the city and the entire Westchester region at greater risk of the spread of novel Coronavirus. Presently, Mount Vernon has two confirmed cases and two cases awaiting test results for Coronavirus. Montefiore failed to establish any effective protocols and resources to deal with this developing situation in Mount Vernon. There is no known plan for monitoring or visible outreach to prevent the potential spread.

As previously stated, Mount Vernon Hospital stands today with capacity for 150 beds which includes a sixth floor that is vacant along with a separate room specifically designed to treat patients with infectious diseases – resources that are deliberately left dormant while the state is in desperate search for hospital beds to deal with this pandemic. Presently, EMS is directed by Montefiore to diverted Mount Vernon patients to New Rochelle Hospital or Montefiore's Moses Campus in the Bronx – both facilities are dangerously overcrowded, which poses great health risks to patients from Mount Vernon, the Bronx, and New Rochelle.

The lack of resources at New Rochelle Hospital was demonstrated in CNN's Dr. Sanjay Gupta recent inside look into how New Rochelle Hospital, in the epicenter of the Coronavirus outbreak, was preparing for a potential influx of Coronavirus patients. In Sanjay Gupta's interview with Dr. Theresa Madaline, an epidemiologist from Montefiore at New Rochelle Hospital, Dr. Madaline explained:

"It's heart wrenching ... We took an oath to take care of people and to have to ration resources is a very painful decision to make. But when we're given no choice, we try to collectively, together make the best decisions that we can." *Dr. Theresa Madaline.*

Montefiore's management concern for profit over patient care has placed doctors, nurses, and health care workers in an untenable position in providing care for patients. As CNN's interview with Dr. Madline reveals, New Rochelle is struggling to accommodate its own patients from that community in dealing with a pandemic which is expected to magnify in the number of new cases.

The Montefiore Moses Campus in the Bronx has a history of overcrowding. Adding more patients to this facility creates a dangerous and potential high-risk situation for Bronx and Westchester residents. It is well established that under normal circumstance sickly patients are packed into the emergency room at Montefiore's Bronx Moses Campus like sardines. The emergency rooms are often dangerously overcrowded and unruly — imperiling the lives of the ailing Bronx residents who flock there, nurses told the Daily News in an August 3, 2018 news article. "It looks like a refugee camp in a war zone," said nurse Benny Matthew, 41, who works at the main Moses Campus' ER in the Bronx. "I'm from India. Even if I go to an emergency room in my country, I don't see things like this". The Daily News reported in an October 15, 2018 article that as the flu season approached "tragedy looms for the bursting-at-the-seams Bronx hospital that is so jam-packed that ER patients have to share space — in the hallways". Montefiore management's plan to exacerbate an already intolerable overcrowded emergency room, by jam-packing Mount Vernon patients into Moses Campus ER, is likely to expose patients to greater risks of infection with Coronavirus. It is a recipe for disaster that endangers the lives of patients from the entire region

We request that Mount Vernon Hospital remains a full-service hospital providing quality medical care to residents and protecting the jobs of doctors, nurses, and health care workers. The health disparities in Mount Vernon are extremely high across overall indicators of Health status

when compared to the rest of Westchester County. Mount Vernon residents have significantly high mortality rates from heart disease, cancer, stroke, and chronic lower respiratory diseases (CLRD). In its Community Health Needs Assessment and Implementation Strategy for 2015-2017, **Montefiore designated Mount Vernon as a “MEDICALLY UNDERSERVED COMMUNITY” with lack of access to primary care services.** This designation was based on an index that includes the infant mortality rate, poverty rate, the percentage of elderly population as well as the primary care physician to population ratio. Mount Vernon was also identified as a Physician Shortage Area in accordance with the Health Resources and Services Administration.

On October 15, 2019, Montefiore announced that NYSDOH will award a \$41 million grant to enable Montefiore to close the only full-service hospital in Mount Vernon and open an Off-Campus Emergency Department (OCED) on Sanford Boulevard. The establishment of the OCED means that hospital beds will no longer be available in Mount Vernon for inpatient hospitalization. The decision was made without any input from Mount Vernon elected officials or the public. We have learned from the Westchester County Health Commissioner that Montefiore has not contact her about its proposed closure of the hospital. Montefiore has not sponsored any public meetings with the community either before or after its October 15, 2019 announcement. Instead, it has given the impression that the closure is a “done deal” because NYSDOH will give “rubber stamp” approval the application with no input from the community or its elected officials. Mount Vernon officials requested that NYSDOH urgently hold a public meeting in Mount Vernon to hear from residents and public officials. That request was ignored.

Montefiore has taken precipitous steps to move forward with the closure even before its application for closure was fully submitted to NYSDOH. Such presumptuous actions undermine public confidence in NYSDOH approval process for an application of large wealthy hospitals. Based on Montefiore’s “scale down” actions, some Mount Vernon residents question whether NYSDOH has already given tacit approval to the closure in a closed-door process.

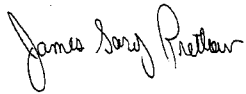
Mount Vernon residents object to Montefiore’s use of the city’s demographic and health needs statistical data to obtain funding from the state of New York while using the funding to serve other locations outside Mount Vernon.

The residents of Mount Vernon requested that **NYSDOH reject Montefiore’s application for the Certificate of Need** that would close the hospital and request that NYSDOH direct Montefiore to implement a plan that would use the \$41 million of taxpayers money to the deliver the health care services designated for the OCED at Montefiore Mount Vernon Hospital. The state should direct Montefiore to meet with and discuss such plan with Mount Vernon elected officials and the community. We believe that it is important that NYSDOH directly engage in this matter in a meaningful way, rather than sit on the sidelines while this community is neglected, disrespected, and victimized. If Montefiore does not wish to provide health care services to Mount Vernon residents, it should not be given taxpayers money by NYSDOH based on Mount Vernon’s demographic and health needs statistics. Governor Cuomo recently expressed the need for building new hospitals to provide for more beds. NYSDOH should use the \$41 million to allow another willing hospital corporation take over and expand services at Mount Vernon Hospital. It would truly be a travesty of justice if NYSDOH decertifies Mount

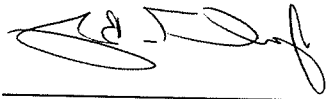
Vernon Hospital, thereby limiting the opportunity for a competitor offering full health care to the Mount Vernon community, and which is blatantly inconsistent with the public positions expressed by Governor Cuomo.

As the elected officials, nurses, and other health care professionals, we call upon Montefiore Health System to put patients before profits and immediately make Mount Vernon Hospital fully functional to provide beds and medical care in this Coronavirus pandemic and beyond.

Sincerely,



J. Gary Pretlow
Member of Assembly
89th A.D.



Jamaal Bailey
Member of Senate
36th S.D.

Lyndon D. Williams

Lyndon D. Williams
County Board of Legislators
District 13



Alessandra Biaggi
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New York State Nursing Association