

August 22, 2018

Dear Colleagues:

I am testifying today in support of the proposed Ambulatory Surgical Center to be built on the grounds of the Lawrence Memorial Hospital. My name is Eileen Dern and I am the Director of Community Services for MelroseWakefield Healthcare (MWHC), formerly Hallmark Health System.

Lawrence Memorial Hospital has a rich past for me. My mother and her family were long-time residents of Medford and many of my relatives and friends continue to live in the city. My grandparents and aunts and uncles received their health care here and many of my family, including my husband and I still receive health care services today at Lawrence Memorial Hospital in Medford.

In my role overseeing Community Benefits and as a registered nurse for more than 40 years, I also understand the changes healthcare needs to make to be efficient, cost effective, and relevant to the community. Over the years, community hospitals lost patient volume and in some cases closed their doors. Boston Regional Medical Center, Choate Hospital, Symmes Hospital, and Malden Hospital were all casualties of these changes in health care utilization. The impacts of closed hospitals and loss of services were mostly felt by those residents unable to afford to go elsewhere such as elders, youth, disabled, residents of color, the GLBTQ community, families with children, immigrants, and lower income residents; the residents that we are proud to serve.

I am excited for the Lawrence Memorial Hospital campus revitalization plan, beginning with the addition of this Ambulatory Surgery Center. Having a safe, new, cost-efficient option for outpatient and day surgery procedures so close to home is a wonderful option for all people in this community. There are no similar facilities in this region that offer the modern, convenient and cost-efficient services that this ambulatory surgery center will provide. As the System Director of Community Services I know how important cost, quality, and caring are to area residents and to the future of our Commonwealth.

By repurposing this campus, with quality partners such as Shields, Medford will have a new modern facility in its backyard. This Ambulatory Surgical Center will be the first of many improvements to come to the LMH campus. It will bring a fresh approach to an affordable local setting and keep needed health services in Medford. This Center will benefit the local community and especially underserved residents and residents served by the Fallon ACO of Wellforce of which MWHC is a proud member.

I am also excited that from a successful DoN application comes much needed dollars to be shared with the community. For the Hallmark Health 2016 CHNA/CHIP process the community was invited to participate in many ways including at community forums, through Stakeholder Interviews, through the Community Benefits Advisory Council (CBAC) and through requests for feedback from the Hallmark Health Community Teams and Patient Family Advisory Councils.

As the Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA)/Community Health Improvement planning (CHIP) is an evolving and dynamic process, the CBAC meets regularly to discuss progress towards CHIP goals and program presentations are provided for the membership to become familiar with the community benefits programs and ask questions of the service providers in the programs. As financial resources from the health system decreased in 2018, the CHIP was amended to reflect those changing resources.

With the support of the current Council and its expanded membership- the Community Health Improvement responsibilities of the DoN will be met; including the prioritization for the new funds and designation of an Allocation Committee to determine the agencies, programs, and partnerships to be funded. It is the Council's hope that the DoN resources can support the needs identified in 2016, very similar to those found in 2013, in alignment with the Massachusetts Department of Health priority areas. FY16 needs included Primary Priorities such as Substance Use Disorders, Behavioral Health, Cancer, Cardiovascular Disease, Diabetes, Infectious Disease, Access to Care (Barriers), and the needs of Vulnerable Populations. Secondary Priorities include Preventable Injuries & Poisonings, Respiratory Health, Obesity Prevention and Intervention, Violence Prevention, and Disaster Readiness & Emergency Preparedness.

Once DoN funding is approved and the priorities to be addressed are chosen, the CBAC will create a fair and equitable process for community agencies to become aware of the funding available, understand the decisions made about the priority or priorities to be funded, and apply for the available funds. An independent evaluator will be chosen to be sure applicants have the capacity to track and measure their efforts and that the program goals will be aligned to create the best opportunity to improve the health of the community in the priority areas. The application process will be shared with the community through the health system's website; community forums, which will be advertised widely through social and traditional media. To ensure equity for potential applicants, planning strategies will be used such as holding forums at multiple times and locations, providing materials in simple easily understandable language, translating documents, and hiring Interpreters, offering food, stipends, and child/elder care resources. Transportation needs will also be considered.

I am convinced that the new Ambulatory Surgical Center and the correlating community support is the right decision for Medford today- not another closed health facility, but a vision for a future health delivery model to serve those most in need and those that have the quietest voices. This is the hallmark of the value of a community health system.

On behalf of myself, my friends and family, and the community, I respectfully ask for your approval of this important project- establishing a new model for health delivery in the City of Medford.

Sincerely,

*Eileen Dern*

Director, Community Services

MelroseWakefield Healthcare