

As physicians with many years of service to patients and South County Hospital in our respective specialties, we continue to be extremely concerned about the exodus of medical providers from South County Health.

Since the current CEO was appointed by the Board of Trustees (BOT) in 2018, physicians and other providers including entire groups from primary care, urology, oncology-hematology, cardiology, hospitalist medicine, pulmonology and gynecology have left or are in the process of leaving their practices at South County Hospital. Although hospital leadership claims that this turnover rate is “within the national norm,” it is a marked departure from the recent past when the resignation of a provider from South County Hospital unrelated to personal issues was exceedingly rare. The hospital leadership also falsely attributed the departure of doctors, physicians’ assistants, nurse practitioners and nurses to the “challenging health care landscape” (a euphemism for suboptimal compensation in Rhode Island). This could not be farther from the truth as evidenced by the fact that most of those who have resigned continue to practice in Rhode Island. As many of the individuals themselves have stated, they left as a result of the adversarial relationship they encountered with the current leadership and its negative impact on their ability to provide quality patient care.

South County Hospital leadership maintains this exodus of providers has not affected the health of the community or patients. This, of course, is also false. While they may have replaced some of the medical providers with expensive “locum-tenens” on short term contracts, patients’ continuity of care and trust in their physicians, two essential tenets of quality, have been severely compromised. In addition, the departure of the providers from the community has led to delays in office visits and testing, other critical components of care for sick and well patients alike.

Over the past several months, in public and behind the scenes, under the auspices of the organization Save South County Hospital (SSCH), a large number of healthcare providers, donors, concerned community members, former Trustees (including multiple past Chairpersons) of South County Hospital and elected officials have attempted to engage the leadership to bring about the change in culture need to “right the ship”. Close to 2,000 (1995) local community members have signed a petition and attended public forums expressing their concern and dismay. Unfortunately, the response of the CEO and current Chairman of the Board has been to attack the motivation of these individuals, labeling more than two thousand people, including these community leaders, as a small group of disgruntled rabble rousers. We lament the continued adversarial posture of the hospital leadership and are particularly discouraged by their misguided decision to bring a lawsuit against Save South County Hospital that was filed last week. In this lawsuit, the CEO and Board Chair allege that members of Save South County Hospital have violated their duty to protect confidential donor information, insinuating that their actions place “millions of dollars” in donations at risk. The allegation goes on to suggest that SSCH seeks to damage the high quality of care that SCH has provided to our community over the past century. Nothing could be further from the truth. The mission of SAVE South County Hospital was and remains the preservation of quality care at South County Hospital and many

of the donors they refer to are involved in these efforts.

This legal action is, in our opinion, yet another attempt by the CEO and Board Chair to intimidate concerned citizens and to distract the public's attention from their mismanagement. By their leaders' own admission, South County Hospital is already facing severe financial hardship. We believe that undertaking this expensive and frivolous lawsuit is an abrogation of their responsibility to safeguard precious funds that could be spent on patient care.

On Thursday, April 3rd at the South Kingstown High School Auditorium at 6 pm, a special Members Meeting of the Endowment of South County Health will be held. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss recent events and to consider the election of new trustees to the board that can make the hospital more attuned to the community and its concerns. This meeting is open to the public and we strongly encourage anyone concerned about South County Hospital and the future of healthcare in Southern Rhode Island to attend.

As cosigners of this letter, we make these claims as individuals with no attribution to any organization or affiliation.

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