**Save South County Hospital Responds to Hospital  
Management’s Lawsuit to Stop Public, Patient,  
 Community and Donor Criticism**

The following is Save South County Hospital's statement about a desperate lawsuit that hospital management filed against our community-based organization, which includes patients, local citizens, South County residents, physicians, former hospital trustees, donors and others. We are a large organization committed to taking back our hospital from the grip of mismanagement. The legal action is an attempt to silence all of us – not just one particular set of us - from criticizing the mismanagement of the community hospital and warning about its path going forward in the coming years.

Because of this litigation, we will have no further comment beyond the statement. The press can attribute information in it to Save South County Hospital, Dr. Steven Fera, director, Save South County Hospital, a non-profit citizens advocacy group of over 2,000 supporters, donors, and patients in the South County region of Rhode Island, or Dr. Chris Van Hemelrijck, a director of Save South County Hospital.

**Statement**

This past week, in a desperate and vindictive maneuver, the hospital has launched a lawsuit against Save South County Hospital and a former development officer who left SCH five years ago. Hospital leaders assail the creation of the Save South County Hospital non-profit advocacy group to preserve and take back our community hospital. They also falsely allege that we accessed confidential donor data to sabotage their philanthropy and even claim we urged the community to withhold donations—baseless accusations that we condemn.

This lawsuit is nothing short of a shameless, desperate stunt designed to choke off dissent and cover up the catastrophic fallout of gross mismanagement at South County Hospital. The community sees through the charade and is demanding a total overhaul of leadership from both the CEO and the Board.

These healthcare officials recklessly ignore the community that has entrusted them with their lives. It is time for them to be thrown out, and we need to take back our hospital. Here’s why:

Save South County Hospital is a no-nonsense grassroots non-profit advocacy group formed in the fall of 2024 in direct response to careless and capricious decisions by hospital administration. These include abandoning cancer patients by forcing out their doctors who strived to provide exemplary treatment. Instead, the Board of Trustees, Chairman Joseph Matthews, Chief Executive Officer Aaron Robinson, and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Kevin Charpentier preferred temporary physicians, disrupting continuity and resulting in a lower standard of care.

We are not an insignificant faction—nearly 2,000 community members have signed our petition, underscoring the breadth of our support because they know and see the management’s neglect of their community hospital. If this is small, as the hospital claims, then why bring a lawsuit? It is designed to intimidate both us as well as members of the community who do and would like to support us. It is also designed to prevent community voices from being heard at upcoming meetings in a few weeks to deal with this situation.

“Let us all remember that South County Hospital's mismanagement has driven away primary care physicians, cancer specialists, urologists, and cardiologists from South County Medical Group, leaving patients desperate for care,” said Van Hemelrijck.

Now, our sole pulmonary specialist has resigned, with no plans for replacement in sight. We have repeatedly confronted hospital leadership and the Board of Trustees, only to have our urgent warnings tossed aside and ignored, as they did the pleas and concerns of the community’s most respected doctors.

The community is not just worried—they are outraged and heartbroken over the loss of trusted providers.

In addition, hospital management falsely claims that secret donor names were revealed and exploited to divert donations from the hospital. No one did that. Donations come from free will; if management’s actions are driving donors away, they must ask, “What are we doing to provoke this response?” That false claim is management's ruse for bringing a suit focused only on the intimidation of us, community members, and most egregiously, the patients that the hospital serves.

Chairman Matthews, Chief Executive Officer Robinson, and Chief Medical Officer Charpentier, stop treating patients now like you have treated staff, many of whom have left.

Further, these same hospital officials proudly post these same donor names on prominent plaques waiting to be read in the hospital lobby and along the cancer center corridor. If that’s not enough transparency, the entire roster of incorporators and high-level donors was handed out like party favors at the 2024 annual meeting.

To further discredit their claim, Board Chairman Matthews, during a December lunch meeting with Dr. Steven Fera of Save South County Hospital, bluntly confirmed that donations had “substantially increased this past year.” True or false?

The administration is blatantly evading urgent warnings as the hospital descends into chaos. On September 24th, the medical staff cast a resounding vote of no confidence in CEO/President Aaron Robinson—a verdict that hospital leadership coldly suppressed.

Meanwhile, employees continue to face relentless bullying and retaliatory actions, further proving that no one is held accountable for this mismanagement style pushing away cradle-to-grave health care in a beloved community hospital.

“Despite all of Rhode Island’s healthcare challenges, this crisis was never meant to exist. It is a heart-wrenching outcome fueled by South County Hospital leaders who are so blinded by their own self-preservation that they've sacrificed the soul of a community's beloved hospital,” said Fera.