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March 25, 2024

Owen Foster, Chair  
Green Mountain Care Board  
144 State Street, Montpelier, VT 05602

Dear Chair Foster and Members of the Green Mountain Care Board:

The Office of the Health Care Advocate (HCA) thanks the Green Mountain Care Board (Board) and its Hospital Budget team for their diligent and thoughtful work developing the FY25 hospital budget guidance. Board staff has directly solicited feedback on the guidance from key stakeholders (e.g., the HCA, the Vermont Association of Hospitals and Health Systems (VAHHS), etc.) for months via weekly meetings and there were numerous written and oral public comment opportunities. The HCA believes the guidance process has been and continues to be transparent, organized, and inclusive.

The HCA recommends that the Board adopt a slightly different affordability metric to benchmark the commercial rate increase cap – average (three-year rolling) of Vermont real wage growth. The advantages of this metric are that it is similarly derived from non-partisan high-quality data (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics), Vermont-specific, understandable, and linked to Vermonter's real financial experience.

As with any year of budget guidance, HCA predicts that whatever the Board adopts will contain elements that the HCA supports as well as parts it would have preferred to have amended. We thank the Board for considering the inclusion of metrics to improve affordability and access.

Respectfully submitted,

s\ Mike Fisher, Chief Health Care Advocate

s\ Sam Peisch, Health Policy Analyst