

May 23, 2023

Owen Foster, Chair, Green Mountain Care Board

Re: VAHHS Request for Amendment to the FY 2024 Hospital Budget Guidance

Dear Mr. Foster,

I write to you today on behalf of Southwestern Vermont Health Care. I am requesting that the Green Mountain Care Board amend the FY 2024 Hospital Budget Guidance and Reporting Requirements (FY 2024 Guidance), specifically amendment of the "net patient service growth rate" to one that recognizes the current economic realities hospitals are managing to allow for a positive operating margin.

I am a resident of Arlington, VT, and have practiced nursing for over 50 years. From 2009–2017 I served as Chief Nursing Officer at Southwestern Vermont Health Care. I am currently a member of its Board of Trustees and am also privileged to serve as a member of the VAHHS Board by virtue of my position on the Board of Directors of the Organization of Nurse Leaders of MA RI CT NH and VT.

I understand and appreciate the complexity of hospital operations. SVMC is a CMS-designated 5-star organization and a 5-time-designated ANCC Magnet organization. These national recognitions reflect SVHC's commitment to the highest quality and safe, timely, equitable, efficient, and effective patient care. According to The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, SVHC cares for the unhealthiest Vermonters.* SVHC has made significant progress in addressing the social determinants of health that contribute to the low health ranking of Bennington County, through our healthcare system's innovation, value-based care initiatives, and partnerships within the community.

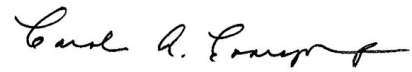
SVMC is also still challenged by the financial and operational impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. SVMC management has developed and is executing a recovery plan to bring operations back to breakeven, and then gradually to positive operating performance. The initial focus is to return to breakeven at the Medical Center (SVMC), with a goal of positive operating margins moving forward.

The proposed 8.6% revenue cap would be a major challenge for SVMC. VAHHS has already outlined the specific impact this budget approach would have on all Vermont hospitals. SVMC is looking to develop our budget plan to meet the patient care needs for the communities we serve, and we therefore respectfully request that you and the GMCB reconsider the planned revenue cap and net patient service

growth rate restrictions to the budget guidance so that we may reasonably achieve our goals of further improved community care for Bennington County.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Carol A. Conroy".

Carol A. Conroy DNP, RN, FAAN

*Beckershospitalreview.com/rankings-and-ratings/the-unhealthiest-county-in-each-us-state-2023.html?origin=BHRE&utm_source=BHRE&utm_medium=email&utm_content=newsletter&oly_enc_id=8620C262679016C)

