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**Sent on:** Monday, November 4, 2024 2:39:27 PM

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**Subject:** Public Comment: Act 167 Community Engagement

A new GMCB Public Comment has been received.

**Submit Time:** 2024-11-04T14:39:26Z

**Name:** Amelia (Amy) Wagner

**Affiliation:** Public comment submitted to GMCB regarding local access to health care

**Town/City:** East Charleston, VT

**Topic:** Community Engagement: Hospital Sustainability and Act 167

**Comment:** In 2015, my husband and I began spending 3 plus days a week in the Northeast Kingdom of VT. We became permanent residents in Charleston in 2016. Since that time we have been supportive of North Country Hospital in Newport, VT through donations as well as for utilizing services at NCH. We feel that small regional hospitals are critical to the health and well being of area residents, particularly for people who live in remote areas, such as the NEK. Before we became residents, we mostly accessed services for occasional ER needs. However, after we moved we became established with a primary care physician associated with NCH and continue to utilize their services. I have personally accessed the following services at NCH: MRI, CT scans, mammograms, DEXA scan, ultrasound, respiratory care, nutritional counseling, physical therapy, laboratory services, and I do utilize the portal. Smooth interface with specialists occurs as appropriate. Because it is a 2 hour drive to a major hospital, having a local alternative is a big advantage. For example, I had my last colonoscopy at NCH. Given what I know about the rigorous prep for the procedure, I was glad to have only a 20 minute drive on the day of the procedure. 2 years ago, I had surgery to remove a cyst from my knee at NCH, with an excellent result. During COVID, NCH set up vaccination clinics, a big plus for the community! Having access to health care in the community is vital! Many people have difficulty with transportation beyond the area. Additionally, if no health care were available locally, people might simply not seek medical care for routine things due to the access issue. This could lead to small problems turning into big ones that could be life threatening or negatively affect quality of life. Small regional hospitals also take some of the pressure off larger institutions, as well, because services can be accessed closer to home. Smaller hospitals struggle to attract and keep staff, and struggle to access necessary funding. The Green Mountain Care Board needs to recognize the importance of these local institutions and make sure they get the support they need to remain available to the communities they serve. Our lives depend on it!

**Post Comment:** Yes