

May 22, 2023

Owen Foster, Chair
Green Mountain Care Board

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

Dear Chair Foster,

As the Chair of the Board of Southwestern Vermont Medical Center (SVMC), I am writing to express our Board's support for the Green Mountain Care Board (GMCB) to reconsider its 2024 Hospital Budget Guidance. In the GMCB's role as the chief regulatory agency for hospitals in Vermont, your oversight decisions are critical to establishing a framework for the sustainability of our institutions, which have become the safety net for the health care, economic and community support systems in the regions they serve.

As the GMCB is aware, the current forces impacting our hospitals are unprecedented. Issues that range from critical work shortages, extreme inflationary pressures, workplace violence, post-acute care patient gridlock and a lack of mental and behavioral health support services are having a profound impact on both the functioning and the financial viability of our institutions.

Over the years, SVMC has worked diligently at the board, management and medical staff leadership levels to embrace health care reform. We pride ourselves on meeting the historical budgetary guidelines promulgated by the GMCB. Our operations have focused on attempting to meet the needs of the community with an emphasis on high quality, accessible, patient-focused care at a reasonable cost. The SVMC Board is very concerned that the current budgetary guidance promulgated by GMCB will have a direct impact on the hospital's ability to provide the level of services needed by our community. SVMC is currently working closely with State officials to address major health service shortages in our region, especially in the increasing challenging areas of mental health, substance abuse and Medicaid dental services. Providing critical services on a sustainable basis takes money; hospitals need fair and reasonable revenue growth targets that reflect the realities of the medical economic environment in which we operate.

Our Board looks forward to discussing the Bennington regional community with you in September, and the strategic initiatives we are taking to achieve our ongoing goal of sustainably improving health care for the people we serve.

Sincerely,



Kathleen Fisher
SVHC Board Chair