

September 6, 2024

Mr. Owen Foster, Chair
Green Mountain Care Board
144 State St.
Montpelier, VT 05602

Subj: Public Comment on behalf of Rutland Regional Medical Center

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

I appreciate the opportunity to issue public comment today regarding the continued health and well-being of the communities we serve.

We all understand that operating a hospital and ensuring the financial sustainability of healthcare is no easy task. And I recognize that you, as members of the Green Mountain Care Board, face the difficult responsibility of balancing affordability with access to quality health care. These are not easy decisions, but they are necessary, and they have -wide-ranging consequences.

When our hospitals succeed, it is not just about the financials—it is about the people, the patients and communities we serve. It is about our neighbors, our families, the folks we see at the grocery store, or at school pickup. It is about making sure that when individuals need care, they can get it. Whether it is a cancer screening, a life-saving surgery, or a bed in a time of crisis—these are the moments that define not just our hospitals but our community itself.

We know that when hospitals struggle, communities, and the people living and working within those communities end up feeling it most. When services are reduced or access becomes limited, it is the local farmer, the small business owner, the teacher, who may have to go without the care they need. Let us be clear: when that happens, it is not just a hospital issue—it is a community issue.

I understand your role in ensuring that healthcare is affordable for all Vermonters, and that is something we respect. But in the process of making these decisions, we must ensure that we are not compromising the care our communities depend on. When funding is reduced to a point where services are cut, the price we pay is not

just financial—it is personal. The residents who live and work in our region will suffer and bear the burden of limited access to care.

We do not want to be adversaries in this. In fact, we share a common goal. We want to work with you to find a solution that ensures both fiscal responsibility and access to the high-quality care Vermonters deserve. Rutland Regional Medical Center, like so many other hospitals across our state, is here to serve the people, to keep them healthy and whole, and to be a pillar of strength in times of need.

But to do that, we need the resources to provide that care, strengthen our workforce and invest in important capital improvements to our buildings, equipment and technology. The staff recommendations presented on September 4th raised some concerns that will have unfortunate impacts to these initiatives. The recommendations did not fully account for the evidence we provided or the reality we're facing on the ground. While we are ready to work with you to find common ground, we believe the recommendations, if adopted, could lead to outcomes that would be detrimental to the communities we serve—namely, reduced services, fewer available beds, reduced capital investment to expand access, and longer wait times for critical care.

In closing, I want to reiterate why we are here. We are here to make sure that Vermonters continue to have access to the care they need, when they need it. We need to do that in a way that is sustainable for the long term. I believe we can achieve that balance together. I ask that you consider the needs of communities served by Rutland Regional Medical Center and approve our budget as requested and use your discretion to forego reducing FY25 rates to compensate for the FY23 variance. Enforcing the FY23 budget in this FY25 cycle will negatively impact the communities we serve. We respectfully ask that you use your discretion so that we can continue to provide access to the essential healthcare services that are relied on by the community members throughout our region.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'ME Baroody', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mitchell E. Baroody