

**A new GMCB Public Comment has been received.**

**Submit Time:** 5/26/2023

**Name:** Peter J. Stuart, MD

**Affiliation:** North Country Hospital

**Town/City:** Newport

**Topic:** Hospital Budget

**Comment:** Dear Members of the Green Mountain Care Board, I am writing in the hope that you will reconsider your current plan for FY 2024 hospital budgets in the state of Vermont. Your proposed 8.6% two year growth rate in net patient service revenue from FY22 will not meet the increased operating cost needs of the health care system of Vermont. I am a physician and Vermont transplant who has worked in the Northeast Kingdom for 24 years. My colleagues and I have tried over those decades to provide the best care we can for our neighbors and community, despite the many financial constraints we feel. In the last few years, these constraints have only increased as costs have spiraled much higher. We all are aware that this is due to multiple external and internal forces. The pressures of COVID caused many retirements, whether early or not, which led to the need for travelers and locums. Thus, increasing labor costs. We feel this strain particularly in the more remote areas of our rural state. In addition, there have been supply shortages and massive inflation in the cost of pharmaceuticals. Yet, somehow we have barely continued to function, despite the pressures put on our finances. I find it interesting that the website for the GMCB lists as its number one purpose to “deliver innovation in health care payment and delivery”. And, lists as its third purpose to “regulate major areas of Vermont’s health care system”. There is no mention of allowing for innovation in actual health care, just in its financing. There is no understanding of the population we serve. There is also nothing stating that the role is to ensure that the largest private employers in most communities remain viable allowing them to continue to provide good, productive, well-paid jobs. Aside from the obvious health care benefits of having hospitals and health care practices in a community, we are also businesses that employ people. The Board’s role in regulating our budgets as proposed is likely to impact our ability to continue to employ all of those people and to provide up to date health care. It will be one more nail in the coffin of rural Vermont. I came to my adopted state in 1999 and raised my family here. I love the NEK and I want to continue to help my community. If the proposed budget limitations are instituted, I am not sure that this will be an option, because I am not sure that I will have a place to work. Please do the right thing and ensure that we are here for decades more.

Sincerely, Peter J Stuart, MD, FACOG, Medical Director OB/GYN North Country Hospital

**Post Comment:** Yes