



BUILDING A STRONGER COMMUNITY

**UNITED
COUNSELING
SERVICE**

Lorna W. Mattern
Executive Director

May 22, 2023

Green Mountain Care Board
144 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05602

RE: Reconsider and Adjust Hospital Budget Guidance

United Counseling Service (UCS), Bennington's designated mental health agency, appreciates the Green Mountain Care Board's (GMCB) complicated dual mandate of curbing the rising cost of healthcare for Vermonters while ensuring fiscal sustainability of the hospitals serving those Vermonters. However, we recommend the GMCB reconsider and adjust their FY2024 hospital budget guidance.

Our local hospital, Southwestern Vermont Medical Center, is facing significant increases in expenses of labor, energy, pharmaceutical, and supplies. SVMC is in process of implementing an institution-wide performance improvement plan to reduce expenses and build efficiencies. Yet, high quality health care remains expensive to deliver and additional revenue is required for fiscal sustainability.

The GMCB budget guidance, if not adjusted, will cause hospitals to limit critical services and reduce access to care at a time when Vermonters need more convenient care access to care. The SVMC is responsive to those needs with easy to access high quality care. Moreover, improving the efficiency of hospitals through technology deployment and innovation requires investments that cannot occur under the current budget guidance.

Please reconsider and adjust the hospital budget guidance such that hospitals can continue to serve Vermonters and transform care delivery into the future.

Thank you for soliciting public comment on this important issue,

Lorna W Mattern

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Executive Director
United Counseling Service

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Developmental Services • Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services • Head Start • Big Brothers Big Sisters
Community Rehabilitation & Emergency Services • Youth & Family Services

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