

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

**Submit Time:** 5/23/2023

**Name:** Dr. Stephen Leffler, President and COO Tom Little, Board Chair

**Affiliation:** University of Vermont Medical Center

**Town/City:** Burlington

**Topic:** Hospital Budget

**Comment:** Dear Members of the Green Mountain Care Board, We write to you today to strongly express our concerns regarding the current Green Mountain Care Board FY 24 budget guidance and the stark financial realities our medical center is currently confronting. If implemented, the guidance would force patient care changes that no one would want us to make. As the longstanding backstop for services and care in our state, it is essential for the health and wellbeing of Vermonters that UVM Medical Center balance complicated competing demands. The tighter our budget, the more challenging it is to increase access to quality care for our patients, pay competitive wages, and maintain and upgrade our facilities. Striking that balance is what allows us to continue essential and high demand services such as dialysis and inpatient mental health services. The pandemic cast much of the already vulnerable health care sector into chaos. It has reduced our supply of permanent labor, and significantly driven up the cost of temporary labor. We are making every effort to invest in developing a sustainable, permanent workforce. However, these initiatives require time and resources before they can supplant the temporary labor costs that we are currently paying. As we write this letter, we are still relying on more than 350 temporary workers to meet the needs of our patients. For the UVM Medical Center, like any health care institution, there are no simple or easy choices between the needs of its staff, its infrastructure, and the health of its patients. They are all integral parts of providing comprehensive care to our community and region. Should we be required to operate under the FY 24 budget guidance, you would force us into making untenable choices and compromise the heart and soul of our mission – to provide exceptional care without exception. The current regulatory guidance would also almost certainly affect our bond rating. This is a critical time for us as we prepare to upgrade and build new facilities to meet current and future patient care needs and improve access. Damaging our bond rating would inevitably increase the cost of the projects or even make them impossible. The UVM Medical Center wants to work with the Green Mountain Care Board to recognize the seriousness of these issues and help us build a path forward that allows us to invest in our people, equipment and facilities. That will allow us to meet our mission which is to serve all Vermonters when they need us - without exception. We are asking for your prompt reconsideration of your NPR growth target in light of the significant challenges we currently face. As we all strive towards a shared goal of advancing Vermont's health outcomes, we hope the board will display the necessary adaptability and responsiveness to navigate these challenging times. Thank you for your consideration. Sincerely, Dr. Stephen Leffler President and COO, University of Vermont Medical Center Tom Little, Board Chair, University of Vermont Medical Center

**Post Comment:** Yes