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**Name**

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**Affiliation, if applicable**

None

**Town/City**

South Burlington

**Topic**

Hospital Budgets

**Comment**

I oppose the rate increase request by hospitals. Some hospitals have indicated that a growing reliance on traveler nurses and other medical professionals have lead to increased costs. As a result of these costs, the hospitals request a rate increase. Agreeing is a mistake.

Travelers are short term solutions to long term problems that result in a cost savings for hospitals. Hospitals are struggling with ensuring sufficient staffing levels. The biggest challenge in retaining staff in Vermont is twofold: 1) non-competitive compensation; and 2) high cost of living. Permanent staff cannot find affordable housing in the area. Covid 19 and increasing inflation has exacerbated cost of living issues for permanent staff. Many who would prefer to remain in one place have either chose to leave Vermont or become travelers.

Heavy reliance on travelers is a problem of the hospital's own making. Many permanent UVM nurses have opted to become travelers and end up working at UVM for 2 or 3 times as much money as permanent staff. This results in short term increased costs to the hospital - but it is a long term savings for the hospital. The hospital need not account for insurance, retirement, and union expenses for these travel nurses. In the long term, the hospital pays substantially less for travel nurses to the detriment of permanent staff that struggle to ensure high quality patient care while also struggling to survive in Vermont. If hospitals wanted to stabilize staffing shortages and limit their reliance on travel nurses, then hospitals should increase staff salaries or consider rent subsidies/grants. (If hospitals offered rent subsidies, those subsidies might not count as compensation in terms of retirement obligations/liability - so that may be a workable solution for their bottom line).

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Yes