



# CITY OF HAYRE DE GRACE

## OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

**William T. Martin**

April 10, 2020

Hon. Lawrence J. Hogan  
Governor, State of Maryland  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1925

Dear Governor Hogan,

Since University of Maryland Upper Chesapeake Health (UM UCH) first announced its change of plans that it would no longer provide a new hospital to replace Harford Memorial Hospital (HMH), but rather construct a Free Standing Medical Facility (FMF) that would not provide acute care services or even full emergency care, the City of Havre de Grace has urged the rejection of this concept as inadequate and dangerous for the delivery of health care in Harford County. On numerous occasions, we have posed serious questions to the Maryland Health Care Commission (MHCC) that remain unanswered.

Now, in the midst of a global pandemic, unbelievably and inexplicably, the MHCC has scheduled for action, on April 16, 2020 just six days from now, the review in full of all three UM UCH applications. Those applications include the closure of HMH and moving the licensed beds to Bel Air, the construction of a FMF in Aberdeen, and the construction of a psychiatric hospital in Aberdeen. Through the great work of your Administration, with the entire State desperately trying to increase the number of available hospital beds, and with HMH proving it has the ability to deliver essential critical care and expand that care on short notice, the MHCC's action on this matter is unacceptable.

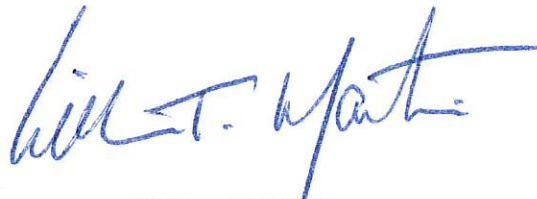
Considering the current state of the COVID-19 pandemic, the surge of critically ill patients both locally and on a national level, and the unknown consequences this pandemic may have on the physical structure of healthcare delivery going forward, the actions of the MHCC are shortsighted and irresponsible. The MHCC's stated mission is to "plan for health system needs, promote informed decision-making, increase accountability, and improve access in a rapidly changing healthcare environment by providing timely and accurate information on availability, cost, and quality of services to policy makers, purchasers, providers and the public." The review of the UM UCH's certificate of need applications during a pandemic and before the peak of the crisis has even hit our State, flies in the face of every goal the MHCC's stated mission seeks to accomplish. As such, it is necessary for legislators to immediately step in and right this wrong before it is too late.

In a recent Washington Post report, Dr. David Marcozzi, a professor and physician who is leading the COVID-19 response for UMMS, stated “[t]he health-care system across the country contracted as a result of trying to provide more efficient care . . . but if you contract the system, then when you have a surge, you are squeezed.” He added, “You don’t have lots of beds open and nurses waiting to provide care.” In addition, in a TIME report, CDC Director Dr. Robert Redfield stated that “If you look at hospital capacity right now, much of it is full, up to 95, 96, 97%, . . . So we really don’t have a lot of resilience in the capacity of our health system.”

How in the world are we still considering moving ahead with closing HMH, one of only two hospitals in Harford County, in the midst of a pandemic in a State that is among the 5 worst in the entire United States in the number of hospital beds available per citizen? The regional hospital system is an outdated model. It is time for a new vision of healthcare delivery – one that is community centered – that can provide acute care, but flexible enough to expand capacity as needs dictate, where rapid response from the local medical community is manageable and not a burden on medical providers and their families. Maryland has the opportunity to rise above the limitations of our current healthcare system and think outside the box.

We ask you to immediately intercede by Executive Order and stop this action, and to demand that any review of the UM UCH’s application be deferred until such time as the State of Maryland can revisit the criteria used for closing such a critical acute care facility in Harford County. Further, we seek a moratorium on the use of FMF’s as substitute emergency rooms, which provide no acute care capabilities, and cannot in most cases even treat Priority 1 and many Priority 2 patients that need immediate emergency care. The Maryland Healthcare Commission may decide to approve or reject UM UCH’s applications; however, we passionately argue that now, in the middle of a pandemic, is the wrong time to make such important and permanent decisions!

Thank you for putting the interests of our residents first!



William T. Martin  
Mayor