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Stated Clerk expresses concern about pending hospital merger in Louisville

Greatest concern is curtailment of full access to medical services

LOUISVILLE—The Reverend Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), has issued a statement expressing concern about the pending merger of Louisville’s University Hospital, Jewish Hospital, and Catholic Health Initiatives of Denver (CHI).

The merger would give CHI 70% ownership of University Hospital, which, Parsons writes, “would shift control of this publicly funded, teaching hospital away from Jefferson County and Kentucky citizens and to an out-of-state health care conglomerate.” That would likely create a situation in which differing religious traditions would result in the curtailment of full access to medical services for patients – particularly reproductive services for women and men.

Parsons writes, “Presbyterians established congregations here nearly 200 years ago – around the same time University Hospital had its beginning. With roots in this community dating back nearly two centuries, University Hospital has served as a safety net for those who have no other access to health care. To restrict the availability of reproductive services, especially for those who can least afford to pay, is unjust and increases the health risk of patients who would be forced to seek those services elsewhere.”

In his statement, the Stated Clerk lifts up a resolution approved by the 211th General Assembly (1999) of the PC(USA) that highlighted the erosion of access to medical services that may happen as a result of hospital mergers like this one.

Parsons encourages Presbyterians to “reach out to the directors of the boards of University Hospital, Jewish Hospital, and Catholic Health Initiatives to express concern about the pending merger and ask that reproductive services for women and men continue to be available if the merger becomes reality.”

The full text of the Stated Clerk’s statement:

I write to express concern about the pending merger of University Hospital, Jewish Hospital, and Catholic Health Initiatives of Denver (CHI).

As a result of the merger, 70% of University Hospital would be owned by CHI, which would shift control of this publicly funded, teaching hospital away from Jefferson County and Kentucky citizens and to an out-of-state health care conglomerate.

Of greatest concern is the curtailment of full access to medical services – particularly reproductive services for women and men – that this potential merger would mean for patients.

Presbyterians established congregations here nearly 200 years ago – around the same time University Hospital had its beginning. With roots in this community dating back nearly two centuries, University Hospital has served as a safety net for those who have no other access to health care. To restrict the availability of reproductive services, especially for those who can least afford to pay, is unjust and increases the health risk of patients who would be forced to seek those services elsewhere.

In 1999, the 211th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) approved a resolution that expressed concern about “any hospital mergers that may erode access to medical services” and encouraged all members of the PC(USA) to learn more about these mergers and the impact they can have “on what health care is available for their communities and in our nation.”

The assembly also called for “creative solutions that will preserve religious freedom, religious traditions, and access to quality comprehensive health care.”

I encourage Presbyterians to reach out to the directors of the boards of University Hospital, Jewish Hospital, and Catholic Health Initiatives to express concern about the pending merger and ask that reproductive services for women and men continue to be available if the merger becomes reality.
