

Tennessee Department of Health Public Hearing

Regarding the Application for the Issuance
of a Certificate of Public Advantage,
Submitted February 16, 2016, by Mountain States
Health Alliance and Wellmont Health System

Pursuant to T.C.A 68-11-1303

Commissioner: John Dreyzehner, MD, MPH, FACOEM

Valerie Nagoshiner, Chief of Staff

Jeff Ockerman, Division of Health Planning

Allison Rajaratnam, Health System Improvement
Coordinator

TAKEN AT: THE RENAISSANCE CENTER
1200 EAST CENTER ST, ROOM 310
KINGSPORT, TENNESSEE

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REPORTED BY: TERRY L. KOZAKEVICH, RPR, LCR

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3 DIRECTOR OCKERMAN: Welcome everybody.
4 My name is Jeff Ockerman. I'm the Director of
5 Health Planning for the State Department of
6 Health. We are here for a public hearing on the
7 proposed merger between the Wellmont and Mountain
8 States hospital systems.

9 Is this better? There you go, okay.
10 So, Dr. D., we'll have to speak right into that
11 mic for this.

12 We had other public hearings scheduled
13 besides this one. We have one set for Thursday,
14 September 29th in Nashville; one set for Thursday,
15 October 6th in Bristol; and then after the
16 application is deemed complete, we have to go at
17 least 50 days out before we can have a final
18 public hearing, and that will be in Johnson City.

19 At this time, I'd like to introduce you
20 to Dr. John Dreyzehner, our Commissioner of
21 Health, and he'll give you some opening comments.

22 COMMISSIONER DREYZEHNER: So very
23 briefly, again, I want to welcome everybody here.
24 I want to recognize Representative Bud Hulsey,
25 who's with us, and Representative Jon Lundberg.

1 Thank you for joining us. If you all
2 would stand and be recognized. (Applause). They
3 have created the law that brings us together
4 today.

5 I also want to thank all of you in the
6 room for taking your time to join us tonight to
7 give you -- to give us your perspectives on a very
8 important decision for the State of Tennessee.

9 I also note that some of you are missing
10 something that may be important to you on a
11 football field. So thank you for, in particular,
12 for taking the time to spend a little bit of your
13 time with us today.

14 We're here today to give Tennessee an
15 opportunity, Tennesseans an opportunity to weigh
16 in on the future of health care in this region and
17 perhaps in our state. The proposed merger of
18 systems in northeast Tennessee and southwest
19 Virginia is a precedent-setting decision, and it's
20 a big decision for this region and for Tennessee.

21 It's the Department's responsibility by
22 law to ensure that the proposal would meet a clear
23 and convincing standard, to provide a public
24 benefit to the citizens of this region and
25 ultimately all of Tennessee.

1 This COPA process is important to the
2 citizens of Tennessee, and the Department is
3 working diligently to fulfill its responsibilities
4 in a timely manner and to be responsive and
5 transparent throughout this complex process.

6 These hearings are part of ongoing
7 conversations with key stakeholders so that there
8 are a number of ways for people to get their
9 perspectives and their opinions heard.

10 We've also provided the ability for
11 people to post comments on the Department of
12 Health's website. Easy to reach if you simply
13 search the terms TN and COPA.

14 The Department is working as quickly as
15 possible to move this process along. Just this
16 past Friday, we met with the applicants to discuss
17 the required Plan of Separation, and we look
18 forward to receiving information that we
19 requested.

20 With that, I will turn this back over to
21 Mr. Ockerman, who will conduct the hearing, and I
22 look forward to hearing all of your comments.

23 We're going to limit our comments to
24 three minutes per speaker, and I would ask you to
25 respect that in the interest of everybody's time

1 and again look forward to hearing your
2 perspectives.

3 And as Mr. Ockerman mentioned, this will
4 not be the last opportunity for in-person
5 comments, and you're certainly always welcome and
6 encouraged to go to our website and provide
7 written comments about this very important
8 precedent-setting and critical decision for health
9 care in Tennessee.

10 DIRECTOR OCKERMAN: Thank you, Dr.
11 Dreyzehner. I would like to remind everybody if
12 you want to speak, we'll be calling your name.

13 And there's a sign-in sheet at that
14 table near the door, so please feel free to sign
15 your name on that if you haven't signed this sheet
16 I have here in front of me.

17 I would also like to introduce to you
18 the other people at this table. At my far left we
19 have Malaka Watson, Associate General Counsel for
20 the Department of Health. Jane Young, General
21 Counsel for the Department of Health.

22 Of course, Dr. Dreyzehner and myself,
23 and then we Allison Thigpen, our Population Health
24 Improvement Specialist who has been working very,
25 very diligently on getting us the information from

1 the applicants so that we can move forward on this
2 application.

3 That's right, I'm sorry, I just gave her
4 wrong last name. She's recently married. She's
5 Allison Rajaratnam, so welcome all of you.

6 And I think we have two state
7 representatives here, and I'd like to give you all
8 the opportunity to speak first, if that would
9 work.

10 Representative Hulsey, would you like to
11 come first?

12 REPRESENTATIVE BUD HULSEY: Be glad to.

13 DIRECTOR OCKERMAN: And again, we're
14 giving everyone only three minutes. Allison is in
15 charge, so watch her.

16 REPRESENTATIVE BUD HULSEY: Okay. Thank
17 you so much. Welcome to east Tennessee.
18 Commissioner, it's good to see you again, and I
19 appreciate all the effort in this process.

20 I've noticed with health folks and
21 health people and doctors, meetings can never be
22 on the first floor. They're always on the third
23 floor to make people like me walk up all those
24 steps so...

25 I just want to know that I am so proud

1 of the hospitals in this area. Been affiliated at
2 least as a customer for several years. 36 years
3 in the police department.

4 I went up there when I was beat up and
5 cut up, and they always took care of me and did it
6 well. And as you know, there's two Level One
7 trauma centers here. That's unheard of.

8 There's only six in the whole state.
9 Two of them are right here.

10 The whole point of all that is combined,
11 these health systems should be able to offer
12 because of their health care and problem-solving
13 second to none any place in the country.

14 I convened a meeting just recently with
15 hospital folks and stakeholders up in Bristol who
16 are dealing -- when I say problem-solving, these
17 are the kind of things that we're up against now
18 that we didn't have 40 years ago.

19 Emergency rooms are becoming dumping
20 grounds for what I call throw-away people or
21 people who have no medical problems, but they end
22 up in the emergency room, and hospitals are
23 bleeding money trying to take care of folks that
24 shouldn't even be there.

25 And we had a meeting up there trying to

1 solve those kinds of problems. It's not just that
2 mental health problems and issues and diabetes and
3 heart problems and all those things, drug abuse,
4 prescription abuse, all those things. We need
5 folks on the cutting edge that together can solve
6 problems for those kinds of things.

7 I voted and supported this COPA bill
8 when it came up recently in the House, and so it's
9 going to be imperative that we solve problems in
10 the medical field and pooling our resources and
11 talent. And, boy, we have it here.

12 Pooling our talent gives us an edge for
13 success, and I urge the Tennessee Department of
14 Health to grant this COPA to Wellmont and Mountain
15 States. Thank you.

16 COMMISSIONER DREYZEHNER: Thank you.

17 DIRECTOR OCKERMAN: Thank you very much,
18 and that was two minutes on the dot.

19 REPRESENTATIVE BUD HULSEY: Not bad.

20 DIRECTOR OCKERMAN: So we really do
21 appreciate that. Representative Lundberg, would
22 you come next, please? Thank you.

23 REPRESENTATIVE JON LUNDBERG: I will
24 tell Bud that in addition to walking up three
25 flights of stairs, there's an elevator.

1 History is a great teacher. We learn a
2 lot from history. It was just a couple decades
3 ago that a hospital just down the road here,
4 Holston Valley Hospital, and that board got
5 together with Bristol Regional Medical Center and
6 said, let's start something. Because we're okay,
7 but we can be better together.

8 They created Wellmont Health System.
9 Two decades later, the wisdom of that decision
10 changed the scope of health care in this region.
11 It made it stronger for absolutely everyone here.

12 Today right now, I challenge you that
13 the situation is remarkably similar. You have two
14 systems that are doing okay that can change the
15 face of health care into ways we hope to achieve
16 from the educational initiatives, from health care
17 and bringing people in.

18 Those two independent hospitals getting
19 together changed it in many, many ways. Because
20 they were together, they could attract better
21 physicians and surgeons, pay better.

22 People came here for health care.
23 That's what happened.

24 I urge you most strongly to follow that
25 wisdom from 20 years ago so that 20 years from

1 now, we can look back and go, boy, those folks
2 really had it together.

3 Thank you very much.

4 COMMISSIONER DREYZEHNER: Thank you.

5 DIRECTOR OCKERMAN: Thank you, sir.

6 Next on the list, we have Tim Attebery.

7 TIM ATTEBERY: Good evening. I am the
8 President of Holston Valley Medical Center. I
9 think it's extremely appropriate that today's
10 hearing about our joint application for the
11 Certificate of Public Advantage is being held in
12 Kingsport.

13 This community has the nickname as the
14 Model City and is known for the way its initial
15 layout and planning was done with a lot of
16 precision on just an open piece of land almost a
17 hundred years ago.

18 And that is exactly what Wellmont Health
19 System and Mountain States Health Alliance are
20 proposing to accomplish through our proposed
21 merger.

22 They come together. Our two
23 organizations will be able to have a beneficial
24 conversation about the most appropriate way we can
25 serve our patients and broader community both

1 today and long-term.

2 We'll be able to examine the best
3 strategic direction not only for the proposed
4 health system but think critically about the best
5 way to allocate limited resources for the patients
6 we serve.

7 Our current arrangement as independent
8 organizations fosters an approach where Wellmont
9 and Mountain States are encouraged to take
10 competitive factors into consideration when we are
11 deciding what services to offer and what pieces of
12 equipment that we may purchase.

13 While patient needs are certainly part
14 of the equation, the thought process is also
15 focused on maintaining and increasing our
16 individual market share.

17 Pardon the pun, but that is not the
18 healthiest approach, especially when we consider
19 the changing landscape of health care and the
20 financial challenges that we face.

21 As everyone in this room knows,
22 reimbursements are not the same as they once were,
23 and more and more care is being delivered in
24 outpatient settings versus hospital settings.
25 That's good for the economy.

1 As the president of Holston Valley, I'm
2 responsible for ensuring that our hospital
3 continues to meet the needs of our patients,
4 physicians, and employees with the limited
5 financial resources that we have available.

6 I can tell you that is becoming
7 increasingly a bigger and bigger challenge, one
8 that we must confront with clearer thinking.

9 So with scarcer resources, I think it's
10 prudent for all of us to think about how we can
11 deliver the highest quality care at the lowest
12 possible cost with the greatest access.

13 Can we accomplish those goals operating
14 in the current scenario? I would respectfully --
15 respectfully suggest that the chances of us
16 attaining the standard, that standard long-term
17 are not as high compared to the merger of the two
18 systems.

19 So I'm convinced that the best solution
20 for Wellmont is for Wellmont and Mountain States
21 to merge and begin that dialogue with the
22 community about what's the best way to leverage
23 the resources that we have in the community.

24 Holston Valley has been a proud member
25 of Kingsport for more than 80 years. We came into

1 existence with community support. We depend upon
2 the community support, and we want the service to
3 continue the best way we can.

4 I think the best way for Holston Valley
5 to continue to provide the best possible resources
6 and services for this community is through a
7 merger with Mountain States Health Alliance and
8 Wellmont.

9 Thank you.

10 DIRECTOR OCKERMAN: Thank you very much.

11 COMMISSIONER DREYZEHNER: Thank you.

12 DIRECTOR OCKERMAN: Next we have Monty
13 McLaurin.

14 MONTY MCLAURIN: Commissioner, glad to
15 see you again. It's been many, many years. And
16 we used to meet at Frontier Health and do a little
17 work about southwest Virginia and northeast
18 Tennessee and try to look for the benefit of the
19 health care of this area for many years to come.
20 I appreciate you and your team being here.

21 You're well aware that the innovations
22 and developments being proposed in our region are
23 ground-breaking work. Enforceable commitments and
24 state supervision put into place by the COPA are
25 what makes the proposal with Mountain States and

1 Wellmont so compelling.

2 It's so unique. It's not like any other
3 merger that you would see in the United States
4 because it does have that level of oversight.

5 I've been in Kingsport since, well,
6 about 13 years now. And I work not only at Indian
7 Path Medical Center, but also I'm responsible for
8 Norton Community Hospital up in Virginia as well
9 as Dickenson, so I have seen more than just the
10 local area and the needs that are here.

11 Our region is disproportionately
12 affected by health issues like diabetes, heart
13 disease, cancer. And we see, you know, this high
14 level of high prevalence of negative health
15 determinants like smoking, all of these types of
16 physical inactivity that have created a
17 generational problem for our area.

18 The issues are extremely complex. And
19 if we're going to end up bringing about any kind
20 of meaningful change in our region's health
21 status, we're going to need a regional strategy,
22 not a competitive strategy as has been for the
23 last many, many years.

24 It not only unites the efforts of the
25 two health systems, it also builds bridges with

1 other communities and regional-based organizations
2 that can impact our people's choices, lifestyles,
3 and behavior.

4 In the COPA, Mountain States and
5 Wellmont have pledged an investment of at least
6 \$75 million in population health improvement.
7 This investment would not be possible without the
8 synergies that we will get through merging.

9 In the COPA, the health systems have
10 also pledged to invest at least \$140 million in
11 specialty services that are currently not
12 available to the people in our region but are
13 desperately needed, and those include places and
14 subspecialties such as pediatrics as well as
15 community-based mental health services.

16 I can tell you at Indian Path, I walk
17 through that emergency room every day. I end up
18 seeing these mental health patients that are
19 seeking treatment, and we're trying to find places
20 for them to be able to receive the kind of care
21 that they need.

22 And when they're sitting there up to
23 sometimes days waiting for transport, it's clear
24 that there is a need for services like mobile,
25 additional mobile crisis health management as well

1 as intensive mental health outpatient services.

2 Both systems made it clear that they're
3 not, that it's not possible, if they're not
4 permitted to merge, they will likely have to seek
5 outside, so I encourage you to be able to take a
6 look very, very closely at this and support this
7 merger effort for the good of our community.

8 DIRECTOR OCKERMAN: Thank you very much.
9 Next, Clark Jordan.

10 CLARK JORDAN: Good evening. I'm Clark
11 Jordan, Vice President and Assistant General
12 Counsel with Eastman Chemical Company.

13 As a self-insured business and one of
14 the largest employers in the Tri-Cities region and
15 in the state, Eastman has a vested interest in our
16 health care. When we're recruiting new talent or
17 we're seeking to retain our existing work force,
18 health care is a critical issue to them.

19 They want to be sure that their families
20 have access to the best health care teams and
21 technology and that their children are able to
22 grow up in an environment that supports that
23 healthy development.

24 Mountain States and Wellmont have made
25 clear that if they're not able to merge with

1 others -- with each other, they may merge with
2 other larger systems outside of the region.

3 Given the choice of allowing the two to
4 merge or allowing them to be sold to an
5 out-of-state entity, I believe that the proposed
6 merger is by far the best choice.

7 Strongly, I believe that the best way to
8 protect access to quality health care for the
9 unique needs of our region is to keep governance
10 at a local level. I also believe that the merger
11 of the two systems can result in benefits to the
12 region that cannot otherwise be realized.

13 In their application, the health systems
14 have outlined commitments related to access and to
15 community health that I believe are extremely
16 important. The health systems have pledged at
17 least \$75 million in population health improvement
18 efforts.

19 I was particularly encouraged by this
20 commitment because we believe regional approach to
21 health improvement is the best way to have a
22 meaningful impact on the biggest drivers of health
23 care cost while at the same time building a
24 healthy future for children.

25 We're particularly encouraged by the

1 health systems' commitment to \$140 million to
2 expand community-based mental health services,
3 residential and outpatient addiction programs, and
4 substances abuse prevention programs. We
5 recognize unique challenges of drug abuse and
6 newborn addiction facing the region.

7 We also support the effort of the health
8 care systems to retain a strong local work force.
9 We're aware that when a larger out-of-area entity
10 acquires a facility, they're likely to integrate
11 the regional -- the local back-office support into
12 an out-of-state area.

13 We encourage, we're encouraged that the
14 merger will allow for those jobs to remain within
15 the region.

16 With the proposed new health system, we
17 appreciate that there are enforceable commitments
18 to place a limit on health care pricing growth in
19 the region. It's extremely important to Eastman,
20 as it is to other businesses in the area, to
21 control these costs.

22 In summary, I believe that the merger of
23 the two health systems is the region's best
24 alternative, and I'm excited about the
25 possibilities that this merger presents for the

1 region. I look forward to seeing what the
2 combined systems can accomplish together.

3 Thank you.

4 DIRECTOR OCKERMAN: Thank you very much.
5 Gary Mabrey.

6 GARY MABREY: Good afternoon.

7 DIRECTOR OCKERMAN: This is Gary Mabrey,
8 M-A-B-R-E-Y.

9 GARY MABREY: Also has been
10 mispronounced Mayberry, but that's all right too.
11 I am Gary Mabrey. I'm President/CEO of the
12 Johnson City/Jonesborough/Washington County
13 Chamber of Commerce.

14 I've reviewed some materials that in
15 October of 2014, I presented a detailed report to
16 the 47 directors on the two boards I work for,
17 serve, and proud to represent.

18 In that report, we noted the reasons why
19 the merger that we're here to discuss that's
20 leading to a COPA would be extremely helpful to us
21 from new research opportunities, investment in
22 addiction, behavioral services, provide additional
23 -- opportunities for the university and the like.

24 During the course of this same time
25 period, our respective chamber submitted a letter

1 in May of this past Spring. And it's always good
2 to know when we come together for something as
3 important as business and health care, as
4 important as it is to the economic development of
5 our region, and we three chambers at that time
6 said, you know, we heartily encourage the merger
7 and the COPA be approved.

8 The benefits from the merger that have
9 been provided in the study -- and some of the
10 information has been sent to you in the
11 application -- repurposing of dollars, the new
12 research opportunities that I mentioned.

13 Creation of a health care system that
14 will be equal to some of the larger systems that
15 we know of in the South. The community health
16 will improve, health care services will be
17 enhanced, and, of course, access and repurposing
18 of those vital dollars for our university and
19 others will be the case.

20 We sent to you another letter in July,
21 and it merely said, we appreciate the historic
22 work that you're doing because it is historic.
23 First time it's ever been done in our state. We
24 recognize the great work of your staff.

25 But our 47 directors in Johnson City

1 once again said we encourage this merger. We'd
2 love to see it occur.

3 And we're looking forward to the
4 approval of the application and moving on to the
5 next process. And we're looking forward to host
6 you in Johnson City 50, 60, 70 days from now.

7 So thank you very much, and happy Labor
8 Day.

9 DIRECTOR OCKERMAN: Thank you. Mike
10 McIntire.

11 MIKE MCINTIRE: Good evening. I'm Mike
12 McIntire. My wife and I have lived in Kingsport
13 for 50 years and have had the opportunity to
14 utilize both systems on a number of occasions.
15 We've always been pleased with the care and the
16 outcome.

17 I am currently serving as Vice Mayor of
18 Kingsport. However, I'm here to present my
19 thoughts and not necessarily the position of the
20 City.

21 I recognize that there are complex
22 financial and service pressures challenging all
23 health care systems today. Mergers are clearly
24 the most obvious way to achieve cost savings while
25 continuing to provide and improve medical care.

1 The mergers of our two local systems can
2 provide the necessary efficiencies to achieve the
3 needed cost savings. This would also allow us to
4 maintain control of our hospitals in this region
5 and would enable us to focus on our region's
6 unique health issues.

7 A merger would prevent the flow of
8 dollars out of our region that could support local
9 medical care and services. I believe that the
10 proposed merger has the highest probability of
11 assuring high-quality medical care in our region
12 for the foreseeable future.

13 While a merger would likely result in
14 some job losses, the two systems together should
15 be able to offer better services and will have a
16 larger patient load that would enable adding some
17 subspecialty services which now require patients
18 to travel to systems in other cities.

19 This would create jobs, help offset some
20 job loss, and provide broader care.

21 I think concerns about monopolistic
22 issues are largely unfounded because procedure
23 payments are controlled by Medicare and Medicaid
24 and the insurance companies. I certainly don't
25 understand how a locally merged health care system

1 could or would charge higher prices for medical
2 service.

3 And last, because the merged system
4 would serve a much larger number of patients, the
5 opportunity to expand medical-related research and
6 training with East Tennessee State University and
7 to more fully tackle public health issues
8 including heart disease, diabetes, obesity,
9 substance abuse, and mental health issues is a
10 significant bonus that would help assure that our
11 next generation is healthier than our current one.

12 In addition, some economic development
13 opportunities in the medical field should arise
14 which will support the growth of our region's
15 economy. I believe these, as well as other
16 factors, support your approval of the proposed
17 merger of Wellmont Health System and Mountain
18 States Health Alliance, and I strongly recommend
19 your approval.

20 Thank you.

21 DIRECTOR OCKERMAN: Thank you, sir. Ted
22 Fields.

23 TED FIELDS: Good evening. Again, my
24 name is Ted Fields. I am currently the Executive
25 Vice President for TriSummit Bank.

1 Being a banker by trade, I am not immune
2 to mergers, so I'm very familiar with those having
3 been on both ends. And I can assure you,
4 throughout my career as a result of mergers I've
5 gone through, things have been better.

6 But today, I come to you as my role with
7 Wellmont. I currently serve as the Chairperson
8 for the Wellmont Foundation Board of Governors,
9 and I want to take a couple of minutes and share a
10 few thoughts with you regarding the pending merger
11 of our two health care systems as it relates from
12 the foundation perspective.

13 Both health care systems have strong and
14 established philanthropic foundations. I can tell
15 you from my personal service on the Wellmont
16 Foundation, which totals approximately seven
17 years, that this organization has put back
18 millions of dollars into the local health care
19 system to advance and enhance patient care and
20 well-being in northeast Tennessee and southwest
21 Virginia.

22 My thoughts are that a combined
23 foundation can and will continue to do amazing
24 things within our community as it relates to
25 health care.

1 Just think if we combined those dollars
2 as opposed to splitting them. A combined
3 foundation will continue on with our philanthropic
4 advances, which will lead to more services for our
5 respective communities and continue to advance
6 those causes that are near and dear to all of us.

7 So to sum it up, I support and endorse
8 the merger of our two health care systems, and I
9 feel that our communities will be better served
10 going forward.

11 I also strongly believe that the
12 combined philanthropic support from each of the
13 foundations will be something that everyone in our
14 community can and will be very proud of.

15 Thank you.

16 COMMISSIONER DREYZEHNER: Thank you.

17 DIRECTOR OCKERMAN: Thank you very much.
18 Jeffrey Altom.

19 JEFFREY ALTOM: I apologize for not
20 participating in earlier meetings. I am not very
21 articulating. With two minutes, I'll make it
22 quick.

23 My understanding, okay, I am against the
24 merger. My understanding is the trauma center at
25 Holston Valley is going to be eliminated.

1 So that will -- all the patients coming
2 out of Virginia stop at Holston Valley, be
3 stabilized, and then sent on to the ones that have
4 trauma centers.

5 I am aware that once if this does
6 happen, there is going to be a bunch of
7 specialists leave, which will create the staffing
8 levels of the specialists at the different
9 hospitals to be lower.

10 What is going to happen is doctors,
11 specialists will be going to other hospitals, like
12 surgeons. They will be operating in operating
13 rooms they are not familiar with.

14 They will be working with staff that
15 they are not familiar with in the rooms, and that
16 is going to lead to doctors not having confidence
17 and a bigger possibility of mistakes in those
18 rooms.

19 I am aware that you have already had
20 some specialists from one hospital go to other
21 hospitals. What I have heard is that when this
22 happens, the employees at the hospital they go to,
23 it's like they dislike them and are not giving
24 them complete cooperation like they get at the --
25 where they're based at a regular hospital.

1 And I know one of you is from the health
2 department or whatever. I am aware that they are
3 hiring a lot of nurses, and they are being put
4 through their trial period, and then they get
5 fired. The reason they get fired is they do not
6 know the basics they should know.

7 I would like to know if you all go to
8 these training hospitals and let them know what
9 the requirements are before the hospital will hire
10 them that they need instead of wanting the
11 hospitals to train them further more to their
12 standards.

13 DIRECTOR OCKERMAN: Thank you. Mr.
14 Altom, your time is up. I noticed you have some
15 notes in your hand. If you want to hand those to
16 us, we can put those into the record.

17 JEFFREY ALTOM: I don't think you could
18 even read them.

19 DIRECTOR OCKERMAN: Okay. But thank you
20 very much, sir. Dan Pohlgeers.

21 DAN POHLGEERS: Good evening,
22 Commissioner and panel. My name is Dan Pohlgeers.
23 Thank you for being here tonight, and thank you
24 for giving me the opportunity to speak to you once
25 again.

1 I am an independent medical practice
2 consultant here in the Tri-Cities. I represent
3 several groups, but I'm not here tonight
4 representing any particular group.

5 I would like to say that I applaud the
6 Department of Health's transparency, and I'm very
7 delighted to hear that the Department is
8 continuing to seek Separation Agreement with the
9 COPA ruling. I believe that that's a very
10 important part of the Public Advantage.

11 I did want to just mention one other
12 area in the literature that was put on-line and
13 also some information about the Tennessee code.

14 Per the rules, the Tennessee Department
15 of Health Board for Licensing Health Care
16 Facilities, Chapter 1200-08-10-.05, Standards for
17 Ambulatory Surgical Treatment Centers, Section 6,
18 it states, each ASTC must have a written transfer
19 agreement with a local hospital.

20 In the response submitted to the
21 Department's April 22nd, 2016, letter, Mountain
22 States Health Alliance and Wellmont Health Systems
23 have outlined several recommendations to prevent
24 the new health system from reducing competition in
25 the area.

1 I suggest including language in Exhibit
2 10, under Potential Disadvantages of the Proposed
3 Mergers, Subsection (b), that should address this
4 issue.

5 As an example, I would suggest a No. 7
6 to state the new health system will grant a
7 written transfer agreement to all licensed
8 facilities in the geographic service area where
9 such an agreement is mandated by the Tennessee
10 Department of Health Board for Licensing Health
11 Care Facilities.

12 Thank you very much for your time, and I
13 can submit this in writing too.

14 DIRECTOR OCKERMAN: That's great. Thank
15 you very much, Mr. Pohlgeers. Is there anyone
16 else who would like to speak?

17 (A hand goes up in the audience).

18 DIRECTOR OCKERMAN: Yes, ma'am. I
19 believe Kingsport Chamber of Commerce?

20 AUNDREA WILCOX: Yes. I did write it on
21 the sheet there.

22 DIRECTOR OCKERMAN: Okay.

23 AUNDREA WILCOX: That last sheet.

24 DIRECTOR OCKERMAN: Thank you.

25 AUNDREA WILCOX: So good evening, and I

1 just want to say from -- I'm actually here wearing
2 three hats tonight, so the first hat is for the
3 Kingsport Chamber of Commerce. Our president
4 could not be here due to vacation.

5 But from the Chamber, we're just so
6 happy and pleased that you're doing this in our
7 community and letting our citizens be heard
8 tonight, so we really appreciate your due
9 diligence, the transparency of the process.

10 I think that both sides, Wellmont and
11 Mountain States, have done a great job just
12 responding and being as transparent as they can in
13 the process. It's a long process, but we're
14 patient people. We're very patient.

15 So the second hat that I'm wearing here
16 today is I'm on the Wellmont Board, and I've been
17 on that Board of Directors for a number of years.

18 And just from a hospital perspective,
19 you know, the process that led to the duration, it
20 does make it difficult for us to recruit the best,
21 you know, with the uncertainty there.

22 So I know that you're doing the best
23 that you can on the speed of getting this
24 resolved, and we just appreciate that, and I would
25 love to see this resolved quickly.

1 From a citizen perspective, I do live in
2 Kingsport. I've been living here for 12 years.
3 I've used the hospital at Holston Valley.

4 And from a citizen perspective, I try to
5 stay healthy. But if I am sick, I just want to
6 know that there's access and enough supply, and I
7 feel like the merger would be good for the
8 community as far as extending that.

9 So I am in support, and thank you for
10 being here tonight and giving me an opportunity to
11 speak to you.

12 COMMISSIONER DREYZEHNER: Thank you.

13 AUNDREA WILCOX: Thank you.

14 DIRECTOR OCKERMAN: Thank you very much.
15 We took a short break this afternoon and walked
16 around downtown Kingsport and had a really
17 enjoyable time, so thank you for that. You're
18 doing a great job here with your community.

19 AUNDREA WILCOX: Thank you.

20 DIRECTOR OCKERMAN: Anyone else who
21 would like to speak? Dr. Dreyzehner, would you
22 like to close?

23 COMMISSIONER DREYZEHNER: I would just
24 say we got some really good information tonight.
25 Some things we heard before. Some things we have

1 not. I really appreciate your commitment to the
2 process.

3 I appreciate the fact that we have folks
4 in the community who are willing to stand up and
5 speak, and I thank you for spending some time with
6 us this evening. Have a great rest of your day.

7 DIRECTOR OCKERMAN: Thank you all.

8 THEREUPON, the meeting was concluded at
9 6:12 p.m.

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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATION

STATE OF TENNESSEE)
COUNTY OF SULLIVAN)

I, Terry L. Kozakevich, LCR #394, Licensed Court Reporter, Registered Professional Reporter, **(and notary public)**, in and for the State of Tennessee, do hereby certify that the above meeting was reported by me and that the foregoing **33** pages of the transcript is a true and accurate record to the best of my knowledge, skills, and ability.

I further certify that I am not related to nor an employee of counsel or any of the parties to the action, nor am I in any way financially interested in the outcome of this case.

I further certify that I am duly licensed by the Tennessee Board of Court Reporting as a Licensed Court Reporter as evidenced by the LCR number and expiration date following my name below.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my notarial seal this 1st day of September, 2016.

Terry L. Kozakevich, LCR #394
Registered Professional Reporter
Expiration Date 9/30/2017
Notary Public Commission Expires 7/24/18