

April 2, 2013

To: The Legislative Delegation Representing Lee County, Florida

Senator Lizbeth Benacquisto Senator Garrett Richter
The Honorable Dane Eagle The Honorable Heather Fitzenhagen
The Honorable Matt Caldwell The Honorable Ray Rodrigues

The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Legislators:

We, the members of the publicly elected Board of Directors of Lee Memorial Health System, unanimously urge you—as an elected representative of the same constituents of Southwest Florida—to pass legislation now that expands health insurance coverage for low-income Floridians and captures the \$51 billion in federal dollars available to cover the cost. Your hardworking constituents pay federal taxes, and it is only fair that the benefit of those taxes is returned to the community so we can continue to provide for their care.

While we strongly support the expansion of Medicaid, we see that legislative opposition has made it unpopular and likely not achievable this session. Thus, we acknowledge and support alternate solutions to provide insurance coverage and use the federal share to reach more than 1 million Floridians statewide. With the federal dollars in hand, we could expand insurance now, and then take the next three years to work toward a better program.

At 30%, Southwest Florida has one of the highest rates of uninsured in the state. It is second only to Miami/Dade. Struggling without health insurance, many patients use the expensive setting of the emergency department for their care, instead of seeing a primary care physician.

As a safety net health system, Lee Memorial Health System provides services that most hospitals and health systems do not including state designated programs for high risk obstetrics, neonatal intensive care, and trauma. We provide millions of dollars in charity care each year, and do it without any direct local taxpayer support. Through a partnership with the state of Florida and a Low Income Pool grant, we have initiated clinics to provide primary care not otherwise available to thousands of our residents. More than half of these patients would become eligible for insurance under this expansion, and there are tens of thousands more who exceed the capacity of our clinics.

Current federal Medicare laws and regulations will reduce the reimbursement to Lee Memorial Health System alone by \$476 million over the next 10 years. Nearly half a billion dollars is a staggering amount of lost revenue for services that must still be provided to our residents and visitors. As a health system that does not receive direct local direct taxpayer support, we cannot operate at a deficit. The continuing reimbursement cuts from all sectors are pushing us toward the untenable position of prioritizing how to reduce essential health services.

LEE MEMORIAL HEALTH SYSTEM BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Marilyn Stout

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Richard B. Akin
Nancy M. McGovern, RN, MSM

DISTRICT THREE
Sanford N. Cohen, M.D.
David Collins

DISTRICT FOUR
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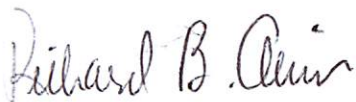
DISTRICT FIVE
Jessica Carter
Stephanie Meyer, BSN, RN

Passing along the unreimbursed costs of Medicaid, Medicare and charity care is a "hidden tax" on businesses that provide insurance and their employees who pay their share of coverage. This shell game may appear to "save" state and federal governments' money directly, but it drives up the cost of business for everyone and makes all Florida business less attractive and competitive over the next decade.

Expanding insurance to low income workers would have a significantly positive impact on our community in the delivery of health care and economically. The Florida Hospital Association reports that the economic impact of this expansion will create 121,000 jobs in Florida, with more than 10,000 of them right here in Southwest Florida.

We urge your support to provide expanded coverage for low-income uninsured Floridians while assuring vital tax dollars of our hardworking Southwest Floridians are returned to benefit our community, not other states. Please do not fail the citizens of our beautiful state. Together we can create a better health care delivery system.

Sincerely,



Richard B. Akin
Chairman, District 2



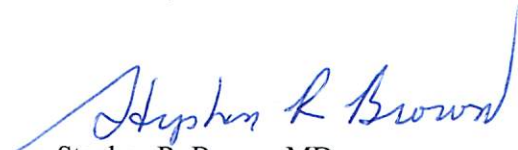
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Stephen R. Brown, MD
District 1



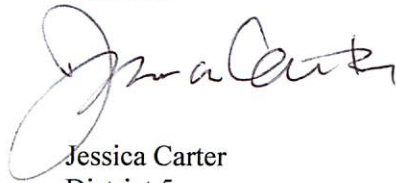
Nancy McGovern, RN, MSM
District 2



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Chris Hansen
District 4



Jessica Carter
District 5



Stephanie L. Meyer, BSN, RN
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