



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeffrey D. Klein

Klein Convenes Bronx Officials To Ensure Westchester Square Medical Center Remains Off State's Closure List

JEFFREY D. KLEIN November 26, 2006



Citing Public Health & Economic Considerations, Senator Jeff Klein Convenes State Officials to Advocate in Support of Targeted Bronx Hospital

BRONX, NY / November 27, 2006 – Responding to recent media reports, State Senator Jeffrey D. Klein (D – Bronx / Westchester) called upon community leaders and his colleagues in government to advocate against the speculated closure of New York's Westchester Square Medical Center (WSMC) in the Bronx. At a press conference, joined by Assemblyman Jose

Rivera; Assemblywoman Naomi Rivera; Assemblyman Carl Heastie; Assemblyman Michael Benedetto, and Assemblyman Ruben Diaz, Jr., Klein urged Governor Pataki and members of the Commission on Health Care Facilities in the 21st Century, to fully consider the public health and economic ramifications of closing the community medical center.

“Why close Westchester Square Medical Center if its discharges, when relocated to other hospitals in the Bronx, would cost the Medicaid program an additional \$4 to \$6 million per year? Where are we sending 23,000 emergency room visits that now end up at Westchester Square Medical Center? Where are we placing 600 hospital employees, mostly from the surrounding community, who will be without jobs? If the answer is for this facility to merge with New York Presbyterian, let’s be ready to do that but the hospital must remain open,” said Senator Klein.

“Closing Westchester Square Medical Center will have an adverse impact on the collective advances we’ve made in medicine, not to mention the devastating impact to the healthcare job market in the Bronx. We must do what we can to ensure this center remains open,” said Assemblyman Michael Benedetto

Assemblywoman Naomi Rivera added, “As an elected official and more importantly as a resident of the Bronx, I feel that closing this facility would create a tremendous hardship for my neighbors and constituents. Everyone has a full plate with their everyday lives; let’s not make access to healthcare another hurdle for people to jump.”

With more than one-third of Bronx residents working in the healthcare industry, facilities like Westchester Square Medical Center, serve as economic anchors to the community. In addition, the Center provides comprehensive quality healthcare to over 50,000 patients and is often the only health care provider for many of the borough’s uninsured. The hospital employs over 600 full time employees – mostly residents of the Bronx.

Over the years, the medical center has proven to be fiscally sound and has never sought a State bailout to meet payroll or other operating expenses. In 2005, the total operational revenue for the hospital was \$73,787,000 with total expenses of \$73,581,000.

Although the medical center's financial outlook has been rather positive, Senator Klein added by saying: "As a society we need to stop placing pecuniary concerns before quality of patient care. We have made tremendous progress in improving the quality of healthcare in our communities, thanks in part to patients' access to pristine medical services and treatment at facilities like New York's Westchester Square."

Westchester Square Medical Center is not a tertiary care institution and when patients require a more specialized level of care, triage arrangements are in place with the area's larger health centers. Year after year, the clinical components of the center have met and exceeded the rigorous State accreditation surveys and have passed all quality assurance requirements by the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO). Westchester Square was one of the first designated stroke centers in New York and has achieved a remarkable record with respect to exceeding quality benchmarks.

The Commission on Health Care Facilities in the 21st Century, which was created by Governor Pataki to overhaul the state's health care system, is expected to recommend the closing of five additional New York City hospitals, according to the New York Sun.

For more information on the commissions report, please visit:

<http://www.nyhealthcarecommission.org/>