

WILLIAM J. LARKIN, JR.
SENATOR, 39TH DISTRICT
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HOUSE OPERATIONS

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August 16, 2016

Howard Zucker, M.D.
Commissioner
NYS Department of Health
Corning Tower, Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York 12237

Dear Commissioner Zucker:

I write to you to strongly urge you to reject St. Luke's Cornwall Hospital's (SLCH) application to close the Cornwall emergency department.

Keeping the Cornwall emergency department open is vital to protecting the health and safety of the residents in my Senatorial District. To anyone who has taken the time to listen to the emergency responders and others in my district, it is clear that SLCH's plans could put lives at risk, and that having an emergency department locally located in Cornwall saves lives.

It is also clear that the availability of the Newburgh emergency room and a handful of urgent care centers in the area does not negate the need for an emergency room in Cornwall. Urgent care centers are not open 24/7 in the local area and, on that basis alone, are not sufficient replacements for an emergency department. In addition, driving to the Newburgh emergency room will, for many of my constituents, more than double the time it takes to receive emergency care, and in all likelihood they will be met by an overcrowded emergency room. This would obviously result in an even more protracted delay in care.

As you well know, every second counts in an emergency. A young mother cannot foresee when her baby may stop breathing and accidents do not happen on a pre-determined schedule. Emergency services must be available when and where they are needed.

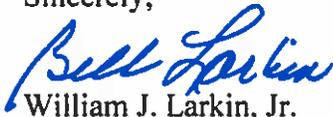
Since SLCH first proposed closing their emergency department three years ago, I have worked tirelessly with St. Lukes-Cornwall, Senator Hannon(Chairman of the NYS Senate Health Committee) and other stakeholders to find the resources needed to keep the hospital open as a

full service facility and sustainable into the future. As you know, the result of those efforts is a crucial \$14 million infusion through the Value Based Payment Quality Improvement Program (VBP QIP) for SLCH.

This is a community hospital, and decisions that impact the community so profoundly should not be made in a vacuum. It is incumbent on the SLCH Board to actively engage with the community to identify thoughtful solutions to the challenges the hospital faces due to a changing healthcare landscape rather than arbitrarily shuttering an emergency department to meet balance sheet challenges.

Therefore, I respectfully request that the Department of Health reject SLCH's application to close the Cornwall emergency department. It is a matter of life and death.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Larkin".

William J. Larkin, Jr.
State Senator

WJL/rn

Cc: Daniel Sheppard, Deputy Commissioner