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Photos attached, captions below

More Than 60 Doctors Pen Open Letter to Governor, Legislators About Impact of Cuts to Hospitals

Putnam, CT – In an open letter delivered to Governor Malloy and key members of the state legislature on Wednesday, physicians and medical practitioners from across Northeast Connecticut called for the preservation of hospital funding in the state’s 2017 budget.

The letter, titled “Because We Care” and signed by more than 60 doctors and practitioners, warns of the negative effects that further cuts to hospital funding will have on healthcare access and costs. An accompanying cover sheet thanked legislators who fought to restore such funding in the state’s 2016 budget on multiple occasions, and asks them to hold strong in their stance to preserve it once again as state budget talks intensify during these last critical days of the legislative session.

Day Kimball Healthcare Chief Medical Officer and VP for Medical Affairs and Quality Dr. John Graham delivered the letter personally to Governor Malloy’s office and was able to deliver the letter and speak personally with Senate President Pro Tempore Martin Looney (D-New Haven), Senate Majority Leader Bob Duff (D-Norwalk) and Speaker of the House Brendan Sharkey (D-Hamden), as well as Northeast Connecticut’s delegation, Senator Mae Flexer (D-Killingly), Representative Daniel Rovero (D-Dayville) and Representative Christine Randall (D-Killingly).

“I am so appreciative that the physicians at Day Kimball are continuing to keep up the momentum on this issue,” Senator Flexer said. “The community and Day Kimball Healthcare employees have been excellent partners and advocates for our local healthcare system, and the physician petitions that were delivered today reinforce just how important hospital funding is to Northeastern Connecticut. Their effective advocacy is heard loud and clear by our Senate leaders Senate President Martin Looney and Majority Leader Bob Duff. Our delegation and Senate leadership is grateful for their support as we continue to push forward legislation to protect our community hospital.”

Dr. Graham explained the impetus behind the letter, saying “Several weeks ago, as we faced the potential loss of our 2016 hospital funding for the third time, the physicians and clinicians in our community expressed the desire to make their voices heard on this issue. They circulated and signed on to this open letter as the vehicle to make that happen.”

Dr. Graham continued, “As the direct providers of healthcare they have a unique

and important perspective regarding what the consequences are likely to be if any further cuts are made, both across the state and especially for the communities of Northeast Connecticut. I think it's important for that perspective to be heard."

The letter opens with, "As medical professionals we understand the ultimate impact of cuts to healthcare funding better than anyone; we are the ones who must literally look it in the face."

It goes on to cite the state's withholding of 2016 hospital funding on top of a 50% increase in the hospital tax and the lowest Medicaid reimbursement rates in the nation, saying "...we feel it our professional responsibility to speak out in an effort to ensure that the public, our governor and our legislators truly understand the impact of these actions as well."

The letter goes on to list a series of consequences, including: a significant decrease in access to healthcare for everyone, but especially for those most in need; the worsening of an already existing shortage of physicians and other healthcare providers; and the continued increase of healthcare costs for everyone, including the state's Medicaid program.

In closing, the letter states, "That is the impact of these continuous cuts. We are struggling to provide care in an environment that is hostile to providers of healthcare at every turn. On behalf of our patients and the communities we serve, we ask our governor, our legislators and our state to act immediately to stop the cuts and save healthcare in Connecticut."

Though hospital funding for fiscal year 2016 was restored since this letter was originally written, Day Kimball Healthcare President and CEO Robert Smanik says the need for its urgent tone still remains.

"Our local legislators and other legislators around the state have been fighting hard to preserve hospital funding against repeated rescissions because they understand the seriousness of the impacts that such cuts would have, and we are so grateful for their efforts," Smanik said. "But we cannot keep fighting the same battle again and again each year, while funding for healthcare continues to be chipped away nonetheless. It is simply not sustainable and the health of our communities is simply too important. Legislators need to ensure that hospital funding remains whole in 2017 and they need to support legislation that will prevent such roller-coaster cuts and rescissions in the future."

The letter is posted in full, along with a complete list of the signing physicians and practitioners, at daykimball.org/BecauseWeCare.

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About Day Kimball Healthcare

Day Kimball Healthcare is a non-profit, integrated medical services provider comprised of Day Kimball Hospital, healthcare centers in Danielson, Dayville, Plainfield and Putnam, Day Kimball HomeCare, Hospice & Palliative Care of Northeastern Conn., Day Kimball HomeMakers, and Day Kimball Medical Group. Its service area includes

Northeast Connecticut as well as nearby Massachusetts and Rhode Island communities. Day Kimball Healthcare's comprehensive network offers more than 1,100 employees including nearly 300 associated, highly-skilled physicians, surgeons and specialists. Its website is www.daykimball.org.