

26 November 2024

TO: Dr. Sunil “Sunny” Eappen, MD
President and CEO, The University of Vermont Health Network

Dear Dr. Eappen,

I write with concern following The University of Vermont Health Network’s November 14th announcement warning of significant layoffs and cuts to health services in the weeks and months ahead. As a public official elected to represent my constituents, I believe our healthcare system should be designed to keep us healthy and provide care when we need it. **Clearly, we have a broken system when the largest hospital network in the state is proposing to cut programs that our communities rely on, strictly for budgetary reasons.**

As an elected official, I am deeply concerned about closing primary care clinics in our rural communities that already have 600-person waitlists. I am deeply concerned about closing the inpatient psychiatric department in our central Vermont community hospital. I am deeply concerned about closing dialysis centers in the far corners of the state.

These decisions are being presented with little vision for what will happen to the current and future patients who rely on the services proposed to be cut. There has been a lot of pointing fingers over the last week about who is to blame and why this is happening, but at the end of the day, if we allow these cuts, our communities will suffer.

Patients without access to primary care end up in the ER and inpatient settings with more acute symptoms. When there are no inpatient mental health beds, people who need inpatient services are shipped far away from their communities (which is not the best approach for recovery) or they are housed in our Emergency Departments which is not the best place for their recovery, where it puts additional strain on an already high pressure system and puts healthcare workers at additional risk.

When making hard decisions about cutting programs, we must consider the costs that may not make their way on to the balance sheet. In this case, the costs to our community health of these proposed layoffs and cuts is far too great.

As an elected representative of our state, my primary goal is to support my constituents and their health. **I, along with my legislative colleagues, am calling on you to reconsider these cuts and commit to working with the Green Mountain Card Board, Agency of Human Services, and the Vermont Legislature to find a path forward that keeps necessary services open and available to those of us who need them.**

Sincerely,

Lieutenant Governor-Elect John Rodgers