

**ALLEN J. ABEL**

September 19, 2016

The Honorable Terry Kilgore, Chairman  
Southwest Virginia Health Authority  
851 French Moore Jr. Boulevard, Suite 178  
Abingdon, VA 24210

Dear Delegate Kilgore:

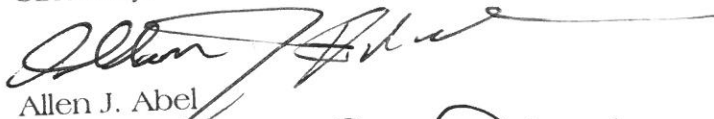
I am a retired Assistant Superintendent of Schools of Smyth County and have lived here for 43 years. My wife retired from Smyth County Schools also, as an Administrative Assistant for Federal Program. We have seen many changes in health care throughout our time here, both at our local community hospital as well as in the delivery of care. We believe that in order to keep up and make sure our local hospital remains viable, another change is necessary and that is for Mountain States and Wellmont to merge.

It is extremely important to us that decisions about the health care of our area be made by local people who care about our region. We don't want to lose local control of our hospitals. This local solution to our health care challenges is far better than anything else these two systems could pursue...alternatives that could lead to higher prices and not necessarily to better quality.


In addition, MSHA and Wellmont have spent too many years spending a lot of money competing with one another. Let's take that money and use it to make our hospitals more stable and our people healthier. We need more mental health services, specialists in our area, and a stronger ability to recruit specialists.

I encourage you to approve this merger. Our people need it.

Sincerely,



Allen J. Abel



Alison E. Abel