

Statement of Support

David Eaton

--

David Eaton

Dear Delegate Kilgore:

I am writing to you as both a local elected official as well as a concerned citizen. As the Vice Chairman of the Russell County Board of Supervisors, I am focused on the health and wellbeing of the constituents I represent. As a concerned citizen, I worry about my children's' future and their ability to find work and stay here in our beloved Southwest Virginia. Russell County Medical Center sits at the center of these issues.

We are fortunate to have a hospital in our county; some of our neighbors don't have that privilege. A viable hospital is key to bringing jobs to our region and future economic development. Industry won't locate in an area lacking a strong health care infrastructure. Businesses won't come to a place that doesn't offer them a strong, healthy workforce. Keeping RCMC open and sustainable is one of my top priorities.

I believe the merger of Wellmont Health System and Mountain States Health Alliance is the only path forward to ensure our hospital can continue to operate successfully. RCMC offers inpatient mental health treatment through Clearview Psychiatric Center. That is a service so desperately needed in our region. Mental health and substance abuse plague our area, and Russell County Medical Center is in a prime position to grow its current behavioral health program as well as expand to offer more substance abuse and adolescent services. I hope you, along with the leaders of both health systems, take a strong look at these opportunities as the merger progresses.

MSHA and Wellmont have pledged to keep all hospitals functioning as health care facilities for five years. In our current unstable economic environment, a promise like that gives me hope. It tells me that the leaders of these two organizations care deeply about our region and want to make investments here that other outside health systems have never and would never make. Wellmont and Mountain States are putting their competitive history aside to do what is right for the people in Southwest Virginia and for that, I applaud them.

Our region needs hope and a promise of a better future. This merger will provide quality care at a lower cost, will invest in the health of our people and will give me, as a local elected official, a very attractive incentive to recruit badly needed industry and jobs to Russell County. Please approve this merger.

Sincerely,

David Eaton

Vice Chairman, Russell County Board of Supervisors