

September 28, 2016

Southwest Virginia Health Authority
851 French Moore Jr. Blvd., Suite 178
Abingdon, VA 24210

Dear health authority members:

I appreciate your coming to Wise County this week and listening to our community's perspective on the cooperative agreement application filed by Wellmont Health System and Mountain States Health Alliance. I fully support this application and believe it will have an extremely beneficial effect on health care and medical education in Southwest Virginia.

One of the many attractive elements of the proposed merger between Wellmont and Mountain States is the plan to invest \$85 million in 10 years to support academics and research. The two health systems are committed to working with others in Virginia and Tennessee to develop and grow academic and research opportunities. They have also committed to supporting post-graduate health care training and maintaining current residency programs in Virginia communities. I enthusiastically applaud these initiatives.

In addition to my primary care practice with Wellmont Medical Associates, I serve as Wellmont Health System's director of osteopathic graduate medical education. That role has enabled me to play a part in the future of health care in our region, and I have found that to be extremely fulfilling.

Since 2010, Wellmont has operated an osteopathic family residency program, which is based in Southwest Virginia. These emerging physicians have enjoyed the privilege of working side-by-side with experienced providers to further develop their skills. We also give them ample opportunity to work under supervision with patients in clinics and in our hospitals in Southwest Virginia and Northeast Tennessee. Our osteopathic residents have also been excellent community stewards, performing public service activities that have helped others.

In the six years our residency program has operated in the region, several of these physicians have established family medicine practices or begun work in our emergency departments or as hospitalists once they have completed their training. That has benefited our region considerably, but we can always do more because the health care needs of our region remain great.

I am thrilled at the prospect of Wellmont and Mountain States coming together to further grow our osteopathic residency programs by combining our resources to advance the quality of care in our region. As our proposed financial commitment of \$85 million demonstrates, we can have an even more meaningful impact on our region if we are permitted to merge.

I urge you to support the merger of Wellmont and Mountain States by granting the cooperative agreement so we can take the next steps to strengthen the communities we are privileged to serve. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Maurice Nida D.O., FACOI, DME