

September 29, 2016

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

Dear Chairman Kilgore and Members of the SWVA Health Authority:

I am writing to express my support of the proposed merger between Wellmont Health System and Mountain States Health Alliance. I feel that this merger is crucial in helping to meet some of our most critical needs that exist in this region. Our aging population, healthcare affordability, access to appropriate specialists and healthcare in general are some of the issues that affect our region.

The proposed merger will help to alleviate these issues in various ways. Part of the plan of this merger is to expand access for needed services and allow patients to seek care where they choose. In addition, the merger will allow the region to have a health system designed exclusively for our region. This will allow for better focus on the health issues that matter most to the people of Southwest Virginia and Northeast Tennessee. The proposed merger also involves working together to operate more efficiently. The Commonwealth of Virginia's supervision in these matters will help to ensure that citizens of this region have access to excellent, yet affordable healthcare options. Please feel free to contact me with any questions regarding my thoughts on this proposed merger.

Sincerely,



Joey Gilbert, Ed.D.
Vice President for Institutional Advancement
Virginia Highlands Community College
(276) 739-2473