



United Way of  
Southwest Virginia  
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September 29, 2016

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

Dear Delegate Kilgore,

In recent years, United Way of Southwest Virginia has undergone a dramatic shift in how we work to serve communities. We are evolving from a fundraising organization to a critical community convener that mobilizes partners and community leaders to expand opportunities for people to succeed.

Since joining the United Way in 2005, I have led our organization to a more regional approach to solving community issues. Between 2009 and early 2015, we have undergone six different mergers and acquisitions. We have grown from serving one county to today serving 13 counties and two cities, covering nearly 15% of Virginia's geographic area.

Yes, part of this momentum is no doubt due to the economic recession and the shortage of funding that has forced the social sector to find new ways to do more with less. But, in today's world, we should all aspire to drive collaborative community change. That means we – and our partners – must facilitate a shared community vision and coordinate action across a diverse coalition, along with mutual accountability, sustained effort and measured results. It means working collaboratively on community-wide and community-based strategies that can drive real change – not tweaks of the status quo.

Because I believe in collaborative work, I served as Co-Chair on the Healthy Children and Families Workgroup with Dr. Wood, the Quillen College of Medicine Pediatrics Chair and Chief Medical Officer at Niswonger Children's Hospital. Along with the senior leadership of both Mountain States and Wellmont, the Healthy Children and Families Workgroup developed community recommendations for improving the health and well-being of all people living in Southwest Virginia.

The people of our region are facing a number of health challenges, including obesity, mental illness and more. It will take all of us working together to reach the mutual goals set by the collaborative work of the Healthy Children and Families Workgroup. The future of Southwest Virginia will be shaped by the choices we make today. By working together, we can expand the opportunities for people in Southwest Virginia to succeed.

Thank you for your consideration of the merger between Mountain States and Wellmont. I agree with the sentiment that communities are Better when they work Together. Thank you for the care you are taking to make a decision that will help our residents have the potential ability to access even better healthcare.

Thank you,

**Travis W. Staton**  
Chief Executive Officer  
United Way of Southwest Virginia