

July 9, 2018

## Working together to ensure viable health care in Springfield

### *A letter from the members of the Mayo Clinic Health System in Springfield Community Board of Directors*

As members of the Mayo Clinic Health System in Springfield Community Board of Directors and residents of Springfield and Lambertton, we recognize the important role our hospital plays in the physical health of our residents and in the economic vitality of our communities. We care deeply about the future of Mayo Clinic Health System in Springfield, its patients and its staff, and have been actively engaged with Mayo leadership in discussing the future path of Mayo Clinic Health System in Springfield.

Dr. James Hebl, Mayo Clinic Health System regional vice president, informed us of Dr. Kelsey Nylander's resignation very shortly after Mayo Clinic leadership knew. During that first meeting, we spent two hours in open dialogue with Dr. Hebl and other senior Mayo leaders discussing the serious situation facing our local medical center. We asked questions. We shared thoughts. We brainstormed solutions. Since then, we have continued to meet regularly, exchanging information and advocating for the best possible outcome.

Through these discussions, we've come to understand the serious circumstances surrounding rural health care. With Dr. Nylander leaving in late October, our local hospital and clinic are left with one physician. One physician cannot handle being on call 24/7/365 in the hospital while also caring for clinic patients. Mayo has been aggressively recruiting physicians to Springfield for five years without success. They've tried three external recruiting firms and have employees dedicated to family medicine recruitment for Springfield. These efforts have proven fruitless, and without additional doctors, it becomes difficult to adequately staff our hospital.

One might wonder, "Why doesn't a world-renowned health care provider like Mayo have the influence to recruit physicians?" Unfortunately, the answer to that question is not a simple one. Rural health care recruitment isn't a Mayo Clinic problem or a Springfield problem—it's a national crisis. According to the Minnesota Hospital Association, as of 2015, there was a national deficit of 62,900 physicians across all medical specialties. Many experts suggest this number will double by 2025. More and more, physicians are seeking employment opportunities that accommodate greater work/life balance and don't include being on call. Furthermore, the number of patients using rural hospitals in the state of Minnesota has declined by 25 percent since 2007, per the Minnesota Hospital Association. Given all of these factors, staffing a rural hospital has become an ever-increasing challenge.

Here at home, we know many people elect to receive health care at other facilities in the area, including New Ulm, Sleepy Eye and Redwood Falls. We recognize that these choices evolve over time depending on a whole spectrum of factors (provider options, insurance coverage, availability, proximity/convenience, etc.). Regardless, it's important for all of us to acknowledge that those choices have a tremendous impact on both the health care system and communities in which care is provided. Our local hospital is a tremendous asset. It provides high-quality medical

care close to home from people who understand our needs. It also employs a significant number of high-skill professionals who bring their gifts and talents to our area. The reach of our hospital extends to our local businesses, schools and community organizations. Its impact and influence cannot be overstated, and it's an amenity that our board feels brings a higher standard of living to all that call Springfield home. It's important that area residents utilize and support the great health care provided in Springfield and Lambertton.

Mayo Clinic is committed to health care in Springfield and Lambertton, and so is this board. We believe it's important for the community to know that our board has been involved in this process since learning of Dr. Nylander's resignation. Thus far, Dr. Hebl and Mayo Clinic have been forthright and timely with communication about the situation. Public communication through frequently asked questions documents, website postings and newspaper articles has occurred and will continue. In addition, numerous community stakeholders have been engaged for discussions and feedback.

As an advisory board, we are not the final decision-makers. We do have influence with Mayo leadership, acting as the voice of the community. We are bringing forward the thoughts, ideas and concerns shared with us, and we're trying to represent the wide spectrum of sentiments felt within the greater Springfield area. Our goal is to maintain our current level of local health care services. Unfortunately, unless solutions to our physician shortage are found in the near future, the delivery method of that health care will need to look different going forward. We want to assure community members that if and when a future model is identified and a final decision is made, it has been made with our input.

We thank our fellow community members for taking an active interest in the current situation. We understand and share your concerns and encourage your thoughtful engagement during this time of transition. If you feel like you have not yet been heard, we encourage you to contact us to relay your thoughts. Working together, we are confident we will find a creative solution that continues to deliver the high-quality care that we have come to expect, whatever form that might take.

Sincerely,

*Jason Beyer*  
*Jeff Kuehn*  
*Paul Pieschel*  
*Jeff Strock*  
*Paul Tauer*  
*Becky Tonn*