

For immediate release:

December 9, 2019

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UNH Survey: Overwhelming Community Support for State Regulators to Negotiate with Seacoast Hospitals on Proposed Affiliation

{Dec 9, 2019 Exeter, NH} According to a new poll of more than 500 Seacoast residents conducted in November by the University of New Hampshire (UNH) Survey Center, more than three quarters (79%) think state regulators should negotiate with Exeter Health Resources, Wentworth-Douglass Hospital and Massachusetts General Hospital to allow their proposed affiliation to proceed.

The affiliation – to create a new, New Hampshire-based regional network to collaboratively deliver healthcare in the Seacoast Region – has been undergoing state and federal regulatory review for the past year. In September, despite the ongoing federal regulatory reviews, the New Hampshire Attorney General’s Office objected to the proposed affiliation citing potential future anti-trust concerns.

“Support from Seacoast residents on this proposed affiliation has not wavered,” said Andrew Smith, director of the UNH Survey Center, which also conducted a similar public opinion survey about this transaction last summer. “We’ve seen increased awareness of the proposed affiliation and very positive support from the community to move negotiations forward.”

The recent survey indicates that the majority (57%) of Seacoast residents are NOT concerned about a reduction in choice and in fact, six in ten consumers are aware that the proposed affiliation would bring more healthcare jobs to the region.

The three hospitals have vowed to move the affiliation forward to gain approval, stressing the importance of long-term sustainability of not-for-profit healthcare in the Seacoast, a commitment to new clinical services, access to Mass General specialty care, and expanded services for mental health and substance use disorder treatment.

“An overwhelming majority (75%) noted the importance of having more Mass General specialty services available locally – one of the primary reasons that our proposed affiliation was developed,” said Mark Whitney, vice president for strategy at Exeter Health Resources. “State officials have said their intentions all along have been to do what is good for the people of New Hampshire. Well, Seacoast residents have spoken, and they are in support of this affiliation. It is time to move the discussion forward.”

For more information on our proposed affiliation please visit www.seacoasthealthcareinitiative.org.

ABOUT THE PARTIES:

Exeter Health Resources consists of three operating affiliates, Exeter Hospital, Core Physicians and Rockingham Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice that together employ more than 2,300 staff members. Exeter Hospital is a not-for-profit, charitable 100 bed, community-based acute care hospital, originally opened in 1897 with just a few beds, and now provides sophisticated services such as cardiac catheterization and extensive outpatient programs in surgery, and radiation and medical oncology. Exeter Hospital was awarded the highly coveted Magnet® designation in 2015 for its excellence in nursing practices and was re-designated in April 2018. The healthcare system has been recognized for ten years by the American Hospital Association’s Health Forum as a “Most Wired” organization. Core Physicians is a community-based, multi-specialty group practice affiliated with Exeter Health Resources. Over 140 physicians and other clinicians in more than 25 locations within the service area offer services in primary care, pediatrics, orthopedics, gastroenterology and many other medical and surgical specialties. Rockingham Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice is a community based non-profit home health and hospice agency that provides services throughout Rockingham County and into Strafford County.

Wentworth-Douglass Hospital is a not-for-profit charitable health care organization located in Dover, New Hampshire with a 110-year history of compassionate care and innovation. Serving the Seacoast communities since 1906, it is a family of 3,000 employees including 500+ registered nurses and a medical staff of over 480 physicians and advanced practitioners dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of residents and visitors to the Seacoast area of New Hampshire and Southern Maine. Wentworth-Douglass Hospital was awarded Magnet® designation in 2016, joined the Massachusetts General Hospital family in 2017 and includes a 178-bed hospital, several urgent care and walk-in facilities, multiple testing centers, Wentworth Health Partners (primary and specialty provider practices), The Works Family Health and Fitness Center and the Wentworth-Douglass Foundation.

Massachusetts General Hospital, founded in 1811, is the third oldest hospital in the nation and the original and largest teaching hospital of Harvard Medical School. The 1,035-bed academic medical center each year admits more than 50,000 patients, records more than 1.7 million outpatient visits at its main campus and health centers, sees nearly 110,000 patients in its Emergency Department and delivers nearly 3,900 babies. The largest nongovernment employer in Boston, the MGH has more than 26,000 employees, including more than 5,000 nurses and nearly 3,000 physicians. For more than two centuries, the MGH has been a leader in bridging innovative science with advanced clinical care. MGH is home to the nation’s largest hospital-based research program, the MGH Research Institute, with an annual budget of more than \$925 million. For more information about the MGH visit www.massgeneral.org.

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