

David Hannon

September 18, 2020

To: Jessica Rider, Health Care Advocate
Fernanda Lopes, MPH, Chief Special Assistant Attorney General

Re: Prospect Medical Holdings, Inc. Hospital Conversion Application

Dear Ms. Rider and Ms. Lopes;

My name is Dave Hannon and I'm the Secretary/Treasurer of Connecticut Health Care Associates, District 1199 NUHHCE, a union that represents Registered Nurses and Technical Employees at Waterbury Hospital, which was purchased by Prospect Medical Holdings in 2016.

I'm going to give you two examples of the safety and staffing issues that my members deal with at Waterbury Hospital, issues that have increased exponentially during the pandemic, and been exacerbated by Prospect's one, overriding concern- its bottom line.

During the national shortage of personal protective equipment, my union forwarded Waterbury Hospital a list of vendors to purchase PPE from. After a few weeks of hearing that there continued to be shortages, I contacted the vendors myself to see what the holdup was. What they told me was both disheartening and unsurprising: The hospital was not going to purchase PPE from these vendors. Prospect wanted donations.

Later, we learned that Waterbury Hospital received nearly 50 million dollars in PPP grants and forgivable loans and another 17-million-dollar tax break from the City of Waterbury. That money seemingly did not go back into patient care, it went to prop up the hospital's profit margin.

Three weeks ago, a nurse who works in the Family Birthing Center at Waterbury Hospital called me because she needed a test for COVID-19 after being exposed to a coworker who had tested positive. The coworker had returned to work after a vacation out of state because Prospect requires staff to go without pay or use their own paid time off to self-quarantine, thus disincentivizing workers to stay home. To further compound the problem, Waterbury Hospital did not tell patients or staff that this employee had tested positive, potentially exposing hundreds of people for several days.

My member tested positive herself and exposed her elderly grandmother and her partner who both live with her. Her partner went to work and exposed two departments of the defense contractor he works for, which had to be shut down for three days to decontaminate. In the hospital, three additional coworkers tested positive, as well as several patients and newborns.

There is no excuse for a hospital not to provide accurate contact tracing of- and to- its employees during a pandemic. Yet, time and again, Prospect fails to do this, because its razor thin staffing model does not allow for multiple employees out at the same time, even during a crisis. Prospect simply refuses to spend the money it takes to provide safe, effective healthcare to its patients or to provide for a safe workplace for its employees.

It is tempting to write some of this off as hard decision making during uncertain times. That is a charitable view and after nearly 6 years dealing with Prospect, I am not inclined to view them charitably. I feel strongly that CalPERS should work to disentangle its investments from Leonard Green and cease even indirect support of a health care provider that takes unnecessary risks with its patients and employees lives for the sake of its finances.