

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 25, 2026

Ms. Sarah Ness
PeaceHealth President & Executive Officer
1115 SE 164th Ave.
Vancouver, WA 98683

Dear Ms. Ness:

On behalf of my constituents who are served in Southwest Oregon by the PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Medical Center, I write to express my deep concern about PeaceHealth's decision to end its decades-long relationship with Eugene Emergency Physicians (EEP). I believe the transition to staffing its emergency department with ApolloMD¹ will not be able to deliver the same patient quality. I urge you to immediately reconsider this action and at the very least delay moving forward with this contract to provide transparency.

PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Medical Center at RiverBend is the only Level II Trauma Center from Crescent City to Corvallis. Families from across Southwest Oregon rely on it in their most vulnerable moments. With emergency department volumes now regularly nearing 250 patients daily², now is not the time for disruption. It is time for transparency in decision making, steady leadership and continuity—without it, I am concerned patient safety will deteriorate and quality will decline. At the very least, a longer transition period should be granted to ensure patient safety and quality remain.

EEP has served both PeaceHealth and this community for 35 years³. EEP provides our community with experienced emergency practitioners who have built deep relationships with patients, nurses and hospital staff. They understand the operational realities of RiverBend. Your suggestion that this transition is necessary to secure “experienced”⁴ clinicians overlooks that record and diminishes the expertise which already exists within your walls. This knowledge cannot be replaced overnight by a corporate contract with an out-of-state leadership team.

Just as importantly, the data matters here. Despite record setting patient volume numbers and significant system constraints, EEP has consistently met, and in many cases exceeded, performance metrics. Additionally, at no

¹ The Register-Guard, *PeaceHealth Replaces Local Emergency Doctors with Atlanta based ApolloMD*. <https://www.registerguard.com/story/news/healthcare/2026/02/04/contract-changes-to-take-place-at-peacehealth-emergency-departments/88513094007/>

² PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Medical Center at RiverBend. *2025 Community Health Needs Assessment*. <https://www.peacehealth.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/PeaceHealth%20Sacred%20Heart%20Medical%20Center%20at%20Riverbend%20CHNA%202025-28.pdf>

³ Oregon Public Broadcasting, *PeaceHealth's Split with Local Emergency Physicians Sparks Disappointment, Resolve*. <https://www.opb.org/article/2026/02/11/peacehealth-hospital-eugene-emergency-physicians-lane-county/>

⁴ LookOut Eugene-Springfield, *I'm Responsible for PeaceHealth's Operations Across Oregon. Here's Why ApolloMD is the Right Choice for RiverBend's Emergency Department*. <https://lookouteugene-springfield.com/story/community-voices/2026/02/19/im-responsible-for-peacehealths-operations-across-oregon-heres-why-apollomd-is-the-right-choice-for-riverbends-emergency-department/>

point was it documented that PeaceHealth worked on a correction plan for any perceived issues they may have faced with the quality of EEP's patient care.

Meanwhile, due to inpatient capacity limitations, physicians are at times forced to evaluate and treat patients in hallways. This is not a standard anyone would choose, but it reflects the bottlenecks beyond the control of RiverBend's frontline emergency clinicians. Despite these conditions, patient satisfaction scores have remained strong. Members of EEP have even been recognized for their service and leadership, including receiving PeaceHealth's own social justice award⁵. These outcomes are not accidental and are a testament to how professional, efficient and committed to our community the physicians and care teams currently staffing the department are.

While I am also concerned about broader staffing pressures, I recognize emergency department crowding as a system-wide challenge driven by inpatient capacity, staffing levels and throughput constraints. Replacing an established physician group does not resolve those structural issues. What it does risk is the loss of institutional knowledge and team cohesion at a time when the margin for error is thin.

Southwest Oregon is a community that values skilled professionals and the stability that stems from long-term investment in a workforce. Choices that trigger large-scale turnover in our region's emergency department send the wrong signal to the very people holding this system together. So, I stand with the Eugene Emergency Physicians. I stand with the nurses, paramedics and frontline staff who have built an integrated emergency care system that works because of trust, continuity and experience and who overwhelmingly voted to see this decision reversed.

As a nonprofit healthcare provider serving our community, PeaceHealth has an obligation to weigh financial considerations against long-term public health impacts. When the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace were more involved in the hospital, the mission was clear. Yet, as they have been replaced, the commitment to the mission has slowly been eaten away. This decision carries consequences that extend well beyond a contract. These consequences are far-reaching and affect the livelihoods of patients, physicians, hospital staff and all families involved. These doctors and their families are part of the fabric of our community. You cannot replace that.

For these reasons, I urge you to engage in meaningful dialogue with Eugene Emergency Physicians, nursing leadership, EMS partners, community stakeholders and those of us involved in healthcare policy making before moving forward with any final decision. Stability, transparency and collaboration must guide the path forward and that is not what has happened in this case.

Healthcare is not a line item in a spreadsheet and lives quite literally depend on the integrity of Southwest Oregon's emergency care. I stand ready to meet with you to discuss these concerns and to support solutions that strengthen, not weaken, the health and safety of the people we collectively serve. I look forward to your prompt response and to maintaining a strong and constructive working relationship with PeaceHealth.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

⁵ PeaceHealth, *Kathy Mailloux, environmental services lead, Social Justice Award*. <https://www.peacehealth.org/healthy-you/kathy-mailloux-environmental-services-lead-social-justice-award>

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Val Hoyle". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "V".

Val Hoyle
Member of Congress