

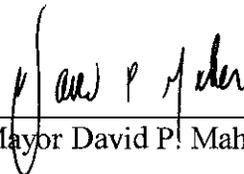
City of Cambridge

May 22, 2014

Dear Councillor:

You are hereby notified to attend a *Special Roundtable/Working Meeting* of the City Council for **Thursday, May 29, 2014 at 12:00 p.m.** in the **Sullivan Chamber**.

By order of His Honor the Mayor.



Mayor David P. Maher

The purpose of this meeting is to continue discussions and dialogue with the Cambridge Health Alliance.

This meeting shall be subject to the Rules of the City Council as amended.

MEETING HELD.



CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

E. Denise Simmons
City Councilor

May 28, 2014

Mayor David Maher
Cambridge City Hall
Cambridge, MA 02139

Mayor
2008-2009

Re: Cambridge Health Alliance Roundtable

Dear Mayor Maher:

I am writing to you in regards to this week's Roundtable, which you are convening to further discuss the Cambridge Health Alliance's plans to merge its Psychiatric Emergency Room with its general ER. Unfortunately, I will be unable to attend this meeting, but I do wish to reiterate some of the concerns I have already raised about this during the May 5 City Council meeting.

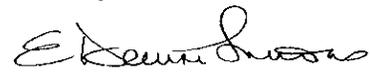
As I stated at that meeting, I do appreciate the fact that the Cambridge Health Alliance finds itself in the position of needing to reduce its operating costs, and that some difficult decisions will have to be made. Yet, I am troubled by the CHA's decision to consolidate its Psychiatric Emergency Room, which has a separate entrance from the main Emergency Room that features additional security staff, cameras for monitoring patient safety, and staff specially trained to triage, assess, and treat those experiencing psychiatric emergencies, with its main Emergency Room entrance. My fear – which is shared by many of the psychiatric professionals that work at the CHA and in the community – is that this consolidation will ultimately compromise the care, safety, and treatment of both the psychiatric patients and the general ER patients. Nothing we have heard from the CHA up to this point has satisfied me that this would not be the case.

It has been estimated that approximately 2,500 patients visit the Psychiatric Emergency Room annually (with another 2,500 visiting the general ER), and this ER is specifically designed to ensure that these patients are seen in an environment that minimizes the potential safety risks to patients, while maximizing the level of emergency care available to them. While CHA officials have argued that they can safely close this specially-designed wing of the hospital and roll the services into the general Emergency Room area, I fail to see how this can be done without degrading the level of psychiatric emergency treatment available in Cambridge.

I am pleased that the City Council has taken a public stand on this matter, and has urged that the Cambridge Health Alliance engage with the community to see if there might be other, alternative scenarios that would allow the Psychiatric Emergency Room to continue operations. It is imperative that the CHA recognize that the changes it is proposing would have a significant, negative impact upon the

people of Cambridge who rely upon this Emergency Room for critical psychiatric care, and who depend upon the institution to instill public confidence in the services it provides. While the organization's financial difficulties are indeed quite real, I very much hope that by continued public conversations and a collaborative effort, we can work to preserve this essential service.

Sincerely,



City Councilor E. Denise Simmons

CC: Donna Lopez

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