

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 5, 2026

Sarah Ness
President and CEO, PeaceHealth
1115 SE 164th Ave.
Vancouver, WA 98683

Dear President Ness:

For decades, PeaceHealth has served as a trusted medical provider for the Willamette Valley and surrounding communities. To maintain that trust, it is crucial that PeaceHealth demonstrates transparency to the people they serve. We are troubled after hearing of PeaceHealth's proposed changes to emergency department (ED) physician staffing across three Oregon hospitals— Sacred Heart Medical Center at RiverBend in Springfield, Cottage Grove Community Medical Center, and Peace Harbor Medical Center in Florence. These emergency departments are critical to the region, and we are deeply concerned that this approach may negatively impact patient care, workforce retention, and PeaceHealth's ability to maintain the efficiency necessary as the region's primary Level II trauma center.

We are concerned that, rather than renewing administrative agreements with Eugene Emergency Physicians— a trusted local partner of 35 years— PeaceHealth has opted to transition to an out-of-state physician staffing firm, ApolloMD. We understand that while PeaceHealth and ApolloMD have recruited physicians, only 26 currently hold an Oregon license. With up to 41 ED physicians from Eugene Emergency Physicians expected to leave, PeaceHealth's transition to ApolloMD may result in a substantial staffing shortfall, raising concerns about coverage, patient safety, and operational stability. RiverBend serves as the region's primary Level II trauma center and is already operating under increased pressure following the closure of the University District (UD) Hospital, leaving little room for disruption to ED staffing or operations.

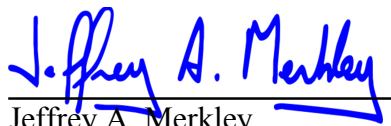
Rapid corporate staffing changes, particularly those driven by cost-cutting measures, private equity involvement, and third-party staffing firms, have been associated with increased ED wait times and reduced operational efficiency. Community members, physicians, and hospital staff have shared significant concerns that this decision could lead to inadequate staffing, which would result in serious disruption and deterioration of ED services at these critical PeaceHealth locations.

We are also concerned by the lack of transparency surrounding these planned emergency department changes, given previous conversations with our offices about the importance of community partnership and trust following the University District ED closure. We have heard concerns from the community that under ApolloMD, physicians may face pressure to meet corporate targets, potentially undermining clinical decision-making and the quality of patient care.

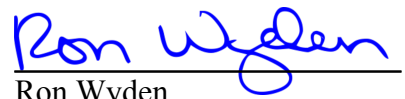
PeaceHealth's success is a direct result of its current providers and their unwavering commitment to patient care. The Willamette Valley, like much of Oregon, is experiencing a critical, ongoing shortage of healthcare professionals. We are deeply concerned that PeaceHealth's actions could accelerate the loss of more high-quality local physicians, further exacerbating existing care gaps and workforce shortages in the region.

We urge PeaceHealth to work in partnership and transparently with physicians, staff, and the community to develop an emergency department staffing plan that ensures continuity of care and maintains the integrity and reliability of emergency services across Lane County.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Val Hoyle
Member of Congress