



September 17, 2012

St. Joseph Medical Center
2901 Squalicum Parkway
Bellingham WA 98225

Dear District Commissioners and Community Members:

I hope this letter finds you well. It was my wish to be with you in person this evening but I have long-standing plans to be out of the country. Please accept my regrets, and my hope that this letter will provide some helpful context and information for you.

For over a century the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace have been providing care to people of the Pacific Northwest, oftentimes in communities that would not otherwise have access to care. We have always considered it an honor and a privilege to serve. Our collaboration with the San Juan County Public Hospital District is no exception. When the new hospital opens in November, it will stand as testimony to your vision and determination to provide a broader range of health care services to island residents.

Since our journey together began, health care has continued to undergo unprecedented change. These changes can be felt at the national, state and local levels. In order to carry on our health care mission, particularly in rural communities, PeaceHealth's board has embarked on a plan to strengthen our organization through growth. We took a major step forward with the announcement of our intention to partner with Catholic Health Initiatives to form a new organization that will continue to fulfill our mission and maintain and expand services while investing in needed technology and improving the quality of our care.

This new organization will be owned 50-50 by PeaceHealth and CHI. It involves all of PeaceHealth's hospitals (soon to be nine with the opening of Peace Island) and those CHI hospitals in Oregon and Washington (seven in all) for a total of 16 hospitals. The new company will be a joint venture owned equally by PeaceHealth and CHI.

Essential to PeaceHealth's decision to partner with CHI in creating this new Northwest health care organization was the commitment that PeaceHealth's mission and values will not change. CHI and PeaceHealth have already agreed that our hospitals, including Peace Island Medical Center, will not change their ethical policies regarding patient care that have been in effect for as long as 40 years. The purpose of the partnership is not to change the physician-patient relationship, but rather to give our providers the tools they need to improve their access to information, the quality of care, and the fiscal strength that allows us to continue to serve.

Preserving the sanctity of the physician-patient relationship has always been a top priority for PeaceHealth. I want to assure you unequivocally that no ethical policies will change if and when our partnership with CHI is finalized. One of the early agreements we reached with CHI is that each hospital will continue to operate within its own ethical policies as they pertain to individual care decisions. This agreement allowed our conversations with CHI to move forward.

The partnership with CHI will enable us to leverage resources and make investments in care that can only benefit the communities we serve. The new Peace Island Medical Center will improve, not diminish, access to services. By way of example, once the hospital opens residents of San Juan Island will have a 24-hour Emergency Department and access to new imaging and diagnostic tools and cancer care services.

The mission of PeaceHealth is to carry on the healing mission of Jesus Christ by promoting personal and community health, relieving pain and suffering, and treating each person in a loving and caring way. The spirit behind this mission will not change with a new partnership, and our commitment to serving all in need endures.

The opening of the new hospital is cause for gratitude and celebration. At the same time, we understand that a new relationship brings new questions that we will address to the best of our ability. We look forward to continuing the conversation as our service together progresses. Best wishes to all of you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrea Nenzel CSJP". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the initials "CSJP" written in a smaller, more formal font at the end.

Andrea Nenzel, CSJP
Chair, PeaceHealth Board of Directors