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—Dateline..... Brattleboro
—Article Number:..... 43936

Notes from editor (not for publication):

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 'This is not a question of whether Brattleboro Memorial
2 Hospital values maternity care. We do.'

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

3 'It is essential for us to work together as a community
4 with our elected leaders to find solutions, because preserving
5 local obstetric care is not a challenge any one hospital can solve
6 alone'

####END SUBHED####

7 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

8 I WANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE what an emotional couple of
9 weeks this has been for many of us in our community.
10 We understand how critical the Birthing Center is and
11 that planning for its closure is not something anyone wants to do.

12 The financial reality of reimbursement rates, declining birth
13 volumes, and on-going workforce challenges have intensified the
14 pressure.

15 The hospital currently loses between \$17,000 and
16 \$21,000 per birth, and the birthing center is on track to lose \$4.8
17 million this fiscal year. This is not sustainable.

18 The board voted to plan for closure in order to submit a
19 budget to regulators that indicates we are righting the ship. We
20 have a responsibility to ensure that BMH remains strong enough
21 to continue serving the community.

22 * * *

23 THIS IS NOT SIMPLY a Brattleboro Memorial Hospital issue.
24 Over the past several years, other Vermont hospitals have also
25 been forced to close maternity services because of the same
26 financial pressures.

27 This is a statewide challenge that requires a statewide
28 solution.

29 We believe our situation could serve as a catalyst for a
30 broader conversation about how Vermont funds maternity care
31 and whether we are committed to preserving access for families
32 across our state.

33 We appreciate the governor's engagement on the issue
34 and the willingness of state leaders to examine potential
35 solutions. We understand there are many competing demands for
36 limited resources across Vermont.

37 I want to clarify the purpose of the state's \$1 million
38 stabilization grant. Those funds were not intended to support the
39 day-to-day operations of the Birthing Center. They were
40 designated to help the hospital evaluate service lines, explore the
41 feasibility of becoming a Federally Qualified Health Center, and
42 assess and improve our financial systems.

43 We appreciate that investment, but it did not address the
44 ongoing operational losses associated with obstetrical care.

45 * * *

46 ALTHOUGH THE board has approved a plan to move
47 toward closing obstetric services, no final closure date has been
48 set. The Birthing Center remains open, and we are continuing to
49 work with the Governor's Office, state agencies, legislators,
50 community leaders, and other partners to determine whether
51 there is a sustainable path forward.

52 It is essential for us to work together as a community
53 with our elected leaders to find solutions, because preserving
54 local obstetric care is not a challenge any one hospital can solve
55 alone.

56 * * *

57 THIS IS NOT A question of whether Brattleboro Memorial
58 Hospital values maternity care. We do. It is not a question of
59 whether we are committed to children and families. We are.

60 The real question is whether Vermont is willing to create
61 a sustainable way to pay for maternity care so that rural
62 communities can continue to provide these essential services.

63 Our hope is that Brattleboro becomes more than another
64 community losing a Birthing Center. We hope it becomes the
65 turning point where Vermont comes together to build a
66 sustainable future for birthing services.

67 If we can do that, we will not only protect families in
68 Brattleboro, but families across our entire state, as well as
69 strengthen the health of Vermont overall.

70 Thank you for being here, for your thoughtful questions,
71 and for your continued support of Brattleboro Memorial Hospital
72 and the community we are honored to serve.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

73 **CHLOE LEAREY**, chair of the Brattleboro Memorial
74 Hospital Board of Directors, gave this statement at a July 14
75 community rally in support of the hospital's Birthing Center.

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

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LINKS:

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####END LINKS####

VIDEO:

####BEGIN VIDEO####

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####END VIDEO####

LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

####BEGIN LOGLINE####

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####END LOGLINE####