

An Open Letter Regarding the Closure of Atlanta Medical Center, from UAPRN President, Ashley Blackmon.

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Dear Community,

It is with great distress that I have been reading about the closure of Atlanta Medical Center. Atlanta Medical Center (AMC), formerly Georgia Baptist, has served the people of Georgia for over one hundred and twenty years. I grew up south of Atlanta and even worked in a smalltown hospital where we knew AMC well. It is where we sent most of our patients whose acuity we could not handle. I decided to go to nursing school and pursue employment at AMC because of that tertiary exposure. After graduating nursing school, I interviewed for multiple jobs, but was the most impressed with my walk-through of the integrated AMC ICU. Trauma, vascular, neurological, surgical, and bariatric were just some of the terms to describe the varied patient populations.

I am disappointed by WellStar's decision to close Atlanta Medical Center and with our state leadership's decision to pour resources into Grady Hospital rather than salvage AMC. Moving AMC's resources around the greater Atlanta area is not going to mitigate a worsening crisis. AMC is a level 1 trauma center but, did you know AMC is also a stroke and a bariatric center? AMC also has one of the main labor and delivery units where many Atlanta OB/GYNs and midwives practice.

AMC's closure is causing private practices who used AMC's office spaces to close. This will cause a huge gap in patient care. Many citizens will be left without primary care, OB/GYN, cardiologist, or neurologist, etc. Patients referred elsewhere may not secure health care services, as not every practice is taking new patients or accepts Medicare or Medicaid. Another unintended consequence is that many nurses will decide to retire instead of starting over at a different location. The loss in experienced nursing knowledge and skill will be immeasurable.

There have always been two major healthcare resources in downtown Atlanta. Grady has been at capacity for as long as I can remember. While working the AMC trauma ICU we were told, "Grady is on diversion" (meaning, they cannot take anymore patients) and so AMC opened trauma beds. Regularly, Grady and AMC would split the Level 1 trauma admissions.

People across the southeast who rely on AMC will lose their lives due to a delay in care. As a country, we have come together to regulate business and industry for the sake of good ethics and supporting humanity. Distress has been felt at rural hospital closures; can we get leadership to understand the distress of this inner-city 460-bed hospital closure? It is time that we make laws to prevent the loss of healthcare resources in the name of business profits. In the state of Georgia, an organization must prove 'certificate of need' to open a hospital. I propose organizations prove 'certificate of need' to close a hospital. More community engagement and transparency could have prevented this contribution to the worsening healthcare crisis.

I am calling on all the people of Georgia, especially legislators, to consider what changes we make moving forward to avoid future closures such as this. Healthcare is not a partisan issue. There is room for positive change within Georgia's healthcare laws. One significant change includes lifting restrictions on advanced practice nurses. **This change will open access to quality healthcare for our citizens and**

put Georgia in link with 26 states, the District of Columbia, and two U.S. territories that allow full practice authority for nurse practitioners. I encourage all who read this to write your legislators and let them know that you support more access to healthcare for Georgians. Let's commit to working together. United, we can make positive change and increase access to quality healthcare for all the people of Georgia.