

**Brackbill, Robert**

---

**From:** pearlreapaf@comcast.net  
**Sent:** Friday, April 12, 2013 3:37 PM  
**To:** Brackbill, Robert  
**Subject:** Highmark/WestPenn Merger  
**Attachments:** highmark ltr41213.docx

Good Afternoon Mr. Brackbill,

I am attaching a lengthy letter for you to put on file that express my feelings as a result of the consultants reports being released and the latest news written in the local newspapers.

I must apologize for the layout. With the weather being so unpredictable today my computer was directing itself. I decided since it did not change the sentences around and just the margins I would adjust them, The letter is still very readable.

Thank you and have a good weekend

Peg Bittner  
2351 Brownsville Rd  
South Park PA 15129  
Criminology Major

Dear Sir,

I realize that it has been just a week since I last contacted you but with the reports coming out and that latest news reports I felt I must submit another comment before a decision is made.

Being that I was on the inside of Highmark for many years, I experienced events that no one on the outside world can understand on their own. These events were internal and at times came and went and the general public did not pay much attention to them.

Now that the possibility of Highmark and UPMC splitting after all these years is on the horizon has anyone taken a hard look at those consequences let alone the consequences of Highmark's actions alone? I don't think so on both parts.

I will start with all that Highmark has invested so far;

Back in 2010-11 they laid off thousands of employees through what they called a "voluntary layoff" In some areas it was far from a voluntary. They wiped out entire units with all the intent in the world. Highmark will stand behind their term "voluntary" by saying they gave employees a choice and yes they did but Highmark already knew that they were going to "fire" everyone anyhow and just wanted to give the impression of being kind and sympathetic.

Highmark sent all these jobs to India but when they sent the membership & billing jobs over in 2011 by the fall of 2011 the management of the regional market realized that they shouldn't have sent all the jobs over and started to move the work back but none of their seasoned workers back. As a result who was there were putting in 60 hour weeks for months and the moral was no were to be located. Chaos and confusion ran the area. Clients and members were getting increasingly angry at the quality of service they were getting. It was all because of poor planning and judgment of management at every level.

The manner at which management decides is Idea generates, first plan of action comes to mind gets the nod. No forethought, no whatifs asked, no plan B's implemented, not enough dry runs made or even thought of. The right questions are not asked to the right people. Most importantly, the people who will be conducting the functions are never included in the planning. It is always people so far removed from the situation that they have no idea what is involved.

Can WestPenn/Allegheny afford that kind of direction? When you are scraping the bottom of the barrel you really do not have time to waste scraping at nothing.

Then you have Highmark's adventure not too long ago when they were in negotiating with Capital Blue Cross to merge. Two years and multi-millions later the deal fell through. For reasons that are hard to explain and understand. Why would any company spend that kind of time and money just to reap what they did and make it sound like something totally different? No one else but Highmark. That maneuver was similar to the one they did on their employees just before they were laid off. The employees were told that the layoffs were necessary in 2010-11 in order for Highmark to be in compliant with the new

health care reform law that was coming into effect in 2014. It was kind of strange to worrying about something four years ahead of time, but if any of us pursued it, we knew we would not get anything close to a straight answer. We could not ever get a copy of the law let alone a straight answer. We were denied documentation on SOX law, the HIPAA law and especially the privacy laws. Anything that dealt with government laws and health care we never had access to. All of our directives came from word of mouth. And you know how that always plays out.

How can anyone with business savvy fell confident that Highmark will not do that to the people of WestPenn/Allegheny if and when they get their hands on them?

Above all else, what about the patients? Everyone has seemed to have forgotten about the details related to the patients. Oh, they have talked about them, but have they seriously thought about them and what the separation could possibly do to them and how a reaction could handled by the providers.

For example, Mrs. Jones is 62 years old and has been a patient of Dr. Fealgoode for 25 years. Dr. Fealgoode belongs to a group of doctors who are connected to UPMC Presby. Mrs. Jones lives in Shadyside so this is very convenient for her. She has Blue Cross insurance as a retiree from her last employer for the past seven years. She took an early retirement since she turned 62 due to her just being tired of working. She has heard via the news and from her doctors that UPMC and Highmark are no longer working together. According to Highmark all UPMC providers and hospitals are out of network. This means that their members will be paying the bulk of the expense. In other words for Mrs. Jones she will have to pay more of what insurance does not pay. She is collecting Social Security but not Medicare. She won't collect Medicare until she is 65. Now what is she going to do? Switch PCPs? She has repoire with Dr. Fealgoode and he knows her better than anyone. 62 years old and having to start over with the first question, "are you a Highmark participant?" Now multiply that by 100 of thousands and toss in a generous portion of chaos while you are at it.

The insurance companies will sugar coat this with so much sugar that a reader will get cavities just reading it. Don't believe it. Times like this never go easy or as projected. Highmark will see a drop in membership.

Can Highmark afford a drop in coverage and still support the coverage of WestPenn/Allegheny? The reports even question it.

I strongly urge to deny the takeover of WestPenn/Allegheny. Highmark has too many financial fires to tend to, mis-management to fix, and get their own business back on trusting terms before they go and clean up someone else's yard. Beside's Highmark does not like unions in their workforce. They denied their employees a union twice.

Ps. I strongly dislike the idea of anyone having to put up with the same thing I did the last 6 years I worked there.

Peg Bittner

2351 Brownsville Rd  
South Park PA 15129  
412-854-3472  
Criminology Major