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Celia A. Hindes, CFRE

Mr. Robert Brackbill  
Chief, Company Licensing Division  
Pennsylvania Insurance Department  
1345 Strawberry Square  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Mr. Brackbill:

I am writing to you today to express my support for the Highmark/West Penn Allegheny Health System (WPAHS) affiliation. As Executive Director of Variety the Children's Charity, a 501(c)(3) organization helping children with mental and physical disabilities, I see on a daily basis how our families struggle with finances to provide quality life experiences and independence for their children with special needs. The majority of the children we serve come from low-income, single parent families, and affordable healthcare is vital to meet their needs.

Variety serves children with disabilities and other major health challenges in ten counties of southwestern Pennsylvania: Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Lawrence, Washington and Westmoreland. Families living in these counties have easy access to hospitals in the West Penn Allegheny Health System (WPAHS) which provides quality care at reasonable costs.

Raising children with mental and physical disabilities is a life-long commitment and families face difficult challenges everyday. For many of these overtaxed yet loving families, finances are a battle with daily medications, special diets, frequent doctor and hospital visits, and specialized/adaptive equipment that drain their resources. Having a strong, competitive hospital provider market helps to hold down prices insuring that families who face these daily challenges can find affordable healthcare for their children to help to meet the demands of raising a family in our region.

Timely approval of the WPAHS is critical to our community and economy. With absent provider competition in Western Pennsylvania, our families suffer and our entire community suffers. I trust you will agree that families of children with disabilities and other major health challenges *need a break!*

In summary, consumer choice of health care providers must be preserved by ensuring the survival of the West Penn Allegheny Health System (WPAHS). Please heed the call of thousands of individuals, families, and organizations supporting this affiliation.

Sincerely,

Celia A. Hindes, CFRE  
Executive Director

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