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Brackbill, Robert

From: John Bonaroti [jb4pt@comcast.net]
Sent: Wednesday, April 11, 2012 11:29 PM
To: Brackbill, Robert
Subject: Support for Highmark-West Penn merger
Attachments: Highmark merger letter.doc

Dear Mr. Brackbill-

Please see the attached document with my comments. Thank you.



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Robert Brackbill
Chief of Company Licensing Division
1345 Strawberry Square
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Mr. Brackbill-

My name is John E. Bonaroti and I am a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh. I have been practicing physical therapy in the eastern suburbs of Pittsburgh for 28 years and I have owned the practice since 1992. I have watched with great interest as the insurance battle has unfolded in our city.

As a private practitioner, I have always valued the 'any willing provider' clause that Highmark has had in place so that any licensed practitioner who meets the qualifications for credentialing, can practice and be paid by Highmark. The reason that I point this out is that I support the Highmark-West Penn merger as I believe that it will promote competition in the city and make providers seek the best, most cost-efficient interventions.

If this merger were not approved by the State Insurance Commissioner, then UPMC would have free reign and would monopolize the city. They do not have an 'any willing provider' clause, but rather what they refer to as 'a vertically integrated network.'

I'll tell you what their definition is of a vertically integrated network- they go out into the community, purchase physician groups / specialists, place them under contract, then demand that they refer only to UPMC providers. In my case, UPMC owns 40 physical therapy facilities around the city, and ironically they placed an office in every location where we have offices. They do not compete on a level playing field and ultimately private practice owners like myself who provide excellent, customer-focused care will be forced out of business.

I am so pleased to read that the Justice Department has ruled that the Highmark-West Penn merger is clear of any obstacles regarding restriction of competition. Truly, the only way for competition to survive in the Pittsburgh region is for this merger to be approved. Please give this careful review with special consideration given to small privately owned businesses like mine which will perish if Highmark is not able to compete with UPMC in the game that they created first by establishing an insurance product to support their medical / hospital network fifteen years ago.

I am available at your convenience to discuss this in further detail if it is warranted.

Sincerely,
John E. Bonaroti, PT, ATC
Owner/Director

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