

September 18, 2012

Health District Commissioners: San Juan Island
Members of the Friday Harbor, San Juan Community

Greetings of peace to each of you!

I regret that I am unable to be with you in person for this evening's gathering. I am hoping that I will be able to participate in at least a portion of the time via phone. However, to be sure that I have an opportunity to share some thoughts, and to respond to some of the concerns I believe have been expressed, I am writing this letter.

I want to take this opportunity to express on behalf of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace and of PeaceHealth, both delight and gratitude to so many of you in the community of Friday Harbor and San Juan Island for inviting PeaceHealth to partner with you in continuing the commitment you have had for so many years to provide quality health care to the people of San Juan Island. I have had the opportunity to meet with Ann, the local artist who is telling the history of health care on the Island through the mural she is painting that will grace the halls of Peace Island Hospital. Through her excitement, and that of others with whom I have had the privilege of sharing stories I have come to know how important compassion and excellence in health care is to and for each of you. It is indeed an honor to be a part of that on-going commitment, and to contribute in this way to the quality of life on the Island.

I realize the recent announcement that PeaceHealth and Catholic Health Initiatives (CHI) have signed a letter of intent to consider the possibility of entering into a partnership has raised questions for some and concerns for others among you. While it is not the intent of this letter to address the particulars of the due diligence that both organizations undertake in this time of mutual exploration, I do want to allay as much as possible some of the misunderstandings that I think may cloud conversations about the possibility of the partnership.

First, it is essential to understand clearly that CHI and PeaceHealth will continue to function within the various hospital and clinics of each organization according to their current policies and practices. This is not proposed, nor it is intended to be, a merger or an acquisition; it is a partnership that, if and when it is determined to be a viable and mutually beneficial, will enhance the ability of each organization to better fulfill the important mission of serving the communities in which the various facilities and services are provided. Such a partnership will offer opportunity for economies of scale in things like purchasing, financial services and other services often termed 'back office' operations. It will also offer opportunity to draw on the wisdom and expertise of both organizations, developed over many decades of ministry and services in the many facets of health care in communities in the Northwest. The partnership between these two strong organizations will create opportunity for strengthening networks of care that will enhance care throughout a four state area.

Second, and of utmost importance, is to assure each of you that the possibility of the PH / CHI partnership, even if the partner relationship becomes a reality, in no way negates or changes the commitment made to you when first you invited PH to participate with you in building a critical care access hospital here on San Juan Island. The Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace ministry of health care begun in the community of Fairhaven in 1890 in response to an invitation from the people has undergone growth and change over the 125 years. Never have the essential elements of the commitment to serve the community made in 1890 waived. PeaceHealth participated with the district health authority in Florence, Oregon to build and assume responsibility for health care in that community. PeaceHealth remains firmly committed there as well. In Ketchikan, Alaska, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace opened a hospital in 1923 and in the late 1950's we were invited by the City of Ketchikan to close Little Flower Hospital, to move into city owned facilities and to continue the ministry of health care there. To this day the city of Ketchikan owns the facilities, leases them to PeaceHealth for something like \$ 1.00 per month and PeaceHealth carries on quality, compassionate care to the community of Ketchikan and Prince of Wales Island. Changes, partnerships, collaborative efforts have not diminished the commitments made to the communities we

serve. I can assure you the same is true here in Friday Harbor and San Juan Island. A promise made is a promise kept!

I realize that some of you gathered here this evening are concerned that the ethics policies of PeaceHealth may be changed or replaced by the ethics policies of CHI. This is a mis-perception. PeaceHealth will continue to exercise its ministry in accord with its ethics policies and within the understandings expressed in, and agreed to by the San Juan District Commissioners and others in the community when first the invitation to work together was initiated. A promise made is a promise kept!

It was clearly disclosed and understood that physicians and caregivers within PeaceHealth do not perform elective abortion. There are instances where an abortion is necessary, and is permitted; such as in cases where an abortion is required to save the life of a mother. PeaceHealth does not do in vitro fertilization. PeaceHealth ethics policy is clear, as is the Statement of Common Values. PeaceHealth policy regarding contraception is also clear: while we neither promote nor condone it, decisions relative to contraception are made in the context of the confidential patient / provider relationship; and PeaceHealth honors those decisions as medically necessary as per the patient / provider determination. PeaceHealth does not participate in physician assisted suicide. Our policy is clear: for physicians and caregivers employed by or who exercise privileges at the hospital or clinics the policy is 'not on our time; not in our facilities or any facility leased from us, and not on our malpractice insurance'. PeaceHealth does not govern what a doctor does on his or her own time. In addition, it is important to remember that physician assisted suicide is not a hospital based event. Should a person decide to seek physician assisted suicide, go through the required processes, receive the prescription, take the doses and for whatever reason find that death does not ensue that person may need and may receive compassionate, quality care within a PeaceHealth facility. PeaceHealth policy regarding wishes of a patient relative to artificial nutrition and hydration is also clear. PeaceHealth physicians and caregivers honor the wishes of the patient as those wishes are expressed in a living will document, in a document assigning decision clearly to a power of attorney for health

care, or in. POLST document. I urge those of you who are interested to read carefully the PeaceHealth Statement of Common Values. Also know that the ethicist at PeaceHealth, St. Joseph Medical Center and / or from the PeaceHealth System Office would be more than happy to talk with you.

Finally, I have tried, in this letter, to be open and transparent. It is much easier and far better to be able to communicate face to face. I look forward to opportunities to converse with you personally at other times. I am honored to serve on the Peace Island Medical Center Community Board so I will definitely have the opportunity to meet many of you. I sincerely hope what I have shared here addresses many of your questions and softens some of your concerns. I know for certain that the best and most effective way of resolving difficulties is through mutual respect, honest dialogue, and willingness to accept and on or the differences that are not negotiable -- the latter are very few indeed!

I wish you a good meeting and pray a blessing for each of us as together we join hands and hearts in our commitment to 'provide quality compassionate care to every person, every time, every touch' - this is the PeaceHealth promise! Let us online together 'in the spirit of healing'!

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you tonight.

Peace,

Sister Kathleen Pruitt, csjp
206-349-3791
Pruitt.kl@comcast.net