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Members of the Board of Directors
Lower Florida Keys Hospital District Board
c/o Board Administrator

Subject: Commissioner Kaufman's Comments Regarding the RFP Process & Future Operator of Lower Keys Medical Center

Dear Chair and Members of the Board:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these remarks regarding the forthcoming Request for Proposal ("RFP") process to select the next operator for our publicly-owned hospital, Lower Keys Medical Center (LKMC). As you are aware, the District has already made significant strides: retaining legal counsel, engaging public input, and publicizing a draft RFP outline.

As a City Commissioner representing Key West, and having convened a citizen-task force over the past two years in partnership with Our Hospital Key West (OHKW), I wish to emphasize several essential priorities and respectfully request that they be reflected openly and clearly in the RFP, the evaluation of proposals, and the operator transition plan.

1. Investment in the Facility and Services

Our community deserves a hospital that is well-constructed, well-maintained, and able to meet current and future healthcare demands. The RFP must require a robust plan and commensurate financial commitment for capital repairs, upgrades and facility replacement as necessary. Equally important is the broadest and most reasonable expansion of medical services for our residents so that more care can be delivered locally, rather than patients being transferred off-island unnecessarily.

2. Attracting and Retaining Qualified Medical Personnel

An operator with a visionary plan must also have the capacity to recruit, train and retain high-quality physicians, specialists, nurses and support staff. The RFP should require clear staffing benchmarks, recruitment strategies, and retention commitments so that Key West remains a full-service hospital community.

3. Minimizing Unnecessary Patient Transfers

In selecting the operator, it is vital that the hospital remain a "non-transfer" facility to the

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practical extent possible. While some transfers are inevitable given resources and patient complexity, our goal must be that patients be treated to the highest quality here in Key West, and not routinely sent away because of avoidable staffing or facility constraints.

4. Financial Strength and Contract Integrity

The operator must demonstrate strong financial resources and clear ability to implement the submitted plan. Moreover, the contract must include a provision prohibiting assignment or sale of the lease/operating agreement without Board approval. The community's interests must be safeguarded and the next operator must be fully accountable.

5. Responsiveness to Stakeholder Input

Many voices in our community including residents, healthcare practitioners, first-responders, advocacy organizations have already weighed in and should continue to be heard. I ask that the RFP process remain transparent, interactive, and inclusive. Stakeholder input must be used not as an afterthought, but as a guiding principle. OHKW and the citizen task force stand ready to assist in outreach, review and public engagement through this phase.

6. Retention of Net Proceeds and Local Benefit

Any net proceeds from the hospital district, whether generated through operations or under the new lease structure, must remain in Key West and the Lower Florida Keys to support hospital operations, capital improvements, community benefit programs and local health-care infrastructure. The RFP should explicitly require that benefit commitment.

7. Plan for Transition to a New Operator

If the District selects a new operator, the transition must be seamless and minimize disruption of services, staffing, and patient care. The RFP should include a detailed transition plan, timeline, and safeguards for continuity of care, patient access and employee protections.

Acknowledgments

My thanks go to OHKW, our partner in this process for the past two years, and to the dedicated members of the fact-finding committee convened by the Board. Their time, insight, and collaboration have been invaluable. I also applaud the Board for advancing the RFP process and inviting competition, transparency and community involvement.

Conclusion

Selecting the right operator for our hospital is one of the most consequential decisions facing our community. With the right operator, the right contract, the right building and the right service model, we have an opportunity to ensure that Key West and the Lower Florida Keys continue to have a full-service hospital, staffed with excellent professionals, delivering world-class care right here in our community.

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Thank you for your leadership on this effort and for considering the points contained in this letter. I look forward to working collaboratively with you, OHKW, our task force and all stakeholders to help move this process forward for the benefit of our residents.

Respectfully,

Sam Kaufman
City Commissioner, District 2
City of Key West