

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

April 4, 2014

The Honorable Marilyn Tavenner
Administrator
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Administrator Tavenner,

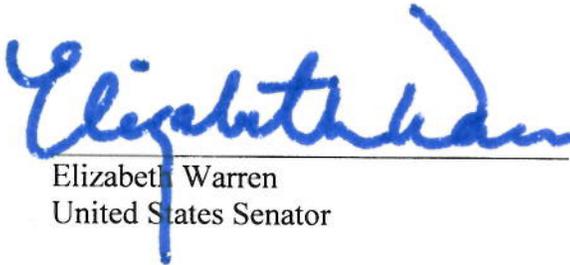
We are writing to express our deep concerns about the closure of North Adams Regional Hospital (NARH) and to ask for your assistance expediting Berkshire Health System's applications for provider status to serve the people of North Adams. NARH has served the northern Berkshire community since 1885, helping to address the health care needs of a community that faces higher than average rates of chronic disease, premature deaths, and instances of substance abuse. The median household income in North Adams is roughly half of the state average and nearly 40 percent of the population lives below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Last week, after years of financial struggles, NARH closed its doors, leaving the vulnerable northern Berkshire community without its main care provider and only emergency department.

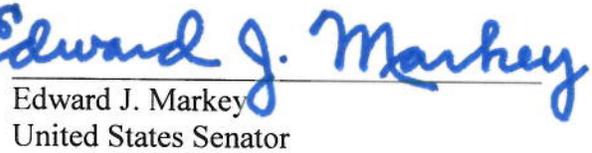
Berkshire Health System (BHS) – which operates the Berkshire Medical Center – and the State of Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) have been working to retain services in North Adams, particularly a hospice center to maintain continuity of care for patients, and an emergency department. To maintain the hospice center at the NARH facility, BHS submitted a licensure application to EOHHS. To maintain an emergency department in North Adams, BHS submitted an application to EOHHS to include the NARH emergency department on Berkshire Medical Center's hospital license as a Satellite Emergency Facility (SEF) under Massachusetts law. Both licensure applications were approved this week by the Department of Public Health within EOHHS. Earlier this week, BHS also submitted 855A Medicare Enrollment Applications to its Medicare Administrative Contractors (MACs) to begin the process of enrolling the hospice center and emergency department as Medicare providers.

We understand that the process of registering Medicare providers can take months, and that enrollment in Medicare is a privilege. We also understand that CMS is responsible for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of beneficiaries. Given the importance of this facility to the northern Berkshire community, we ask that you do all that you can to expedite the application process for BHS. BHS is a successful Medicare provider and the NARH facility was operational as a Medicare provider just last week.

We respectfully request that you work with the MACs, the Region I CMS office, EOHHS officials, and BHS to restore access to medical services for the North Adams community as soon as possible. We stand ready to help facilitate this process in any way necessary.

Sincerely,


Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator


Edward J. Markey
United States Senator


Richard Neal
United States Representative

CC: Jonathan Blum, Principal Deputy Administrator
Raymond Hurd, CMS Regional Administrator (Region I)