

We want our hospital back.

Our community has always trusted South County Hospital (SCH) to provide high-quality care. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of its doctors, nurses, and other professionals, SCH continues to deliver on that promise.

For now.

Sadly, we fear that the future of care at South County Hospital – and the viability of the organization – are threatened by its current management and Board leadership, who have turned their backs on our concerned community amid what is clearly a governance crisis.

Power at the top is tightly concentrated and characterized by little or no collaboration with either clinical staff or community. The number of committees serving the Board – as well as the Board itself – has shrunk. Seven Trustees – an unprecedented number – have departed over the past several years.

Our community's confidence was initially shaken last fall, when the SCH Board allowed itself to be blindsided by management's disagreement with the hospital's Cancer Center team – resulting in the departure of three of the Center's four oncologists, as well as most of its nursing staff. Virtually overnight, patients and families lost long-term relationships with trusted providers.

It has now become painfully apparent that this was only the tip of the iceberg. In fact, the hospital CEO, and the culture he has created, has alienated large portions of the medical staff and scores of other health care professionals – spanning multiple specialties – who have left South County Hospital, after decades of service, to work at other Rhode Island hospitals.

While professing openness and clarity, the SCH Board has responded to rising concern with full-page ads, selective, misleading data and now litigation against a non-profit community group named SAVE South County Hospital, in a blatant attempt to intimidate the group into silence.

Because of this stunning lack of transparency by SCH leadership over many months, we in collaboration with SAVE South County Hospital, are taking the unprecedented step of convening a Special Members' Meeting on Thursday, April 3, at 6pm at South Kingstown High School auditorium.

At this meeting – which is open to the community – we will ask Members present to exercise their right to elect nine new Trustees to the SCH board who will re-establish collaborative relationships with doctors and nurses, create a community outreach program, and work to rebuild trust through transparency and respect. Top priorities will include restoring a permanent Cancer Center team, re-evaluating/replacing executive hospital management, and seeking partnership with a healthcare system that can help advance specialty care, innovation and technology.

We hope our Special Members' Meeting will be a first step in healing our cherished hospital and its relationship with its community. It's not our first choice; rather, it's our last resort. We take this definitive step only after many other attempts have failed. Hundreds of us have participated in private and public meetings, written scores of letters to the Board, signed petitions, and participated in standing-room-only community forums – only to be ignored or rebuffed.

We act now out of a sense of responsibility to so many South County people, from all walks of life, who have reached out to express deep concern.

They want their hospital back. We all do.

Eve Keenan, Past Chair, South County Health Board of Trustees

Christopher Little, Past Chair, South County Health Board of Trustees

Dennis Lynch, Past Chair, South County Health Board of Trustees

March 18, 2025