

ULSTER COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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October 5, 2011

Mr. Mark Kissinger
NYS DOH, Division of Long Term Care
Corning Tower, 14th Floor
Empire State Plaza
Albany, NY 12203

Subject: Support for new skilled nursing home beds in Ulster County

Dear Mr. Kissinger:

I am writing in my capacity as County Executive for Ulster County to express my support for the establishment of additional nursing home beds, which should be located in or in the vicinity of Ellenville in our county.

The economic crisis we are enduring and the enactment of the "Tax Cap" in New York State has forced Ulster County government to consider spending reductions across its entire budget, including our county-operated nursing home, the Golden Hill Health Care Center. In exploring the pros and cons of this matter, the need to maintain every existing nursing home bed in Ulster County has become clear. As the number of seniors in our county doubles over the next twenty years, we will need every one of the 1,099 skilled nursing beds that are currently licensed in Ulster County. As County Executive, I am committed to developing a continuing care system in our county that promotes and facilitates community-based aging whenever possible. However, I believe that as the number of seniors grows, the number of community-based and institutional beds will have to, as well.

Most Ulster County residents may access nursing home beds within our county that are near to where they live, facilitating continued contact by family and friends. Delaware, Greene, Columbia and Dutchess counties are contiguous to Ulster County's northwestern, northern,

northeastern, eastern and southeastern borders, respectively, providing additional nursing home beds that are accessible to Ulster County residents living in those areas. However, the residents of southwestern Ulster County do not have similar proximate access to in-county or out-of-county nursing home beds, and have made a strong argument for addressing this need. There are presently no nursing homes within southwestern Ulster County, none in Orange County that are reasonably proximate to southwestern Ulster County, and only a few in Sullivan County that are accessible to Ulster County residents. The closest nursing homes in Sullivan County are in Liberty—approximately 30 minutes away from the Ellenville area. According to Medicaid claims data, only ten residents of southwestern Ulster County used the Liberty-based nursing homes in 2010.

Additional nursing home beds located in the Ellenville area would be accessible to the residents of Sullivan and Orange counties, providing equal benefit to those communities.

I believe that now is the time to address this need, before the demographics of aging exceed our ability to plan and act. Therefore, I strongly support the concept of adding new (additional) nursing home beds in Ulster County, which should be located in the southwestern portion of Ulster County. My staff and I are available to discuss this concept with you at any time.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. P. Hein', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael P. Hein
County Executive

cc: Mayor Jeff Kaplan
Supervisor Leonard Distel
Ulster County Legislators