OpEd – David Prince
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On October 20 we announced that the board of directors for Olean General Hospital has taken a major step to preserve and strengthen community healthcare in our region. Along with the board of directors at Bradford Regional Medical Center (BRMC) we have signed a non-binding letter of intent to integrate both organizations under a new parent company. The goal is to operate both organizations as close to a single entity as possible.

As the Board Chair in Olean, I'd like to take an opportunity to share a few thoughts with you about why we are taking this step and what it means for the members of our community.

First, I think it's important to note that this action is locally driven and orchestrated. We are working in partnership with BRMC to bring to fruition a shared vision of a regional health system that is best positioned to respond to regional healthcare issues and concerns. Currently, almost half of the nation's 4900 hospitals are involved in multi-hospital systems.

Both hospitals are geographically isolated and increasingly challenged to effectively compete for primary care and specialty physicians, nurses, technologists, and other clinical care providers. Both organizations, like hospitals everywhere, also struggle to generate sufficient capital to support contemporary information technology, clinical technology, and facility infrastructures. To address these realities, we jointly determined that operating as an integrated system will best ensure access to vital medical care and health services for the more than 150,000 area residents in Northwestern Pennsylvania and Southwestern New York who currently depend on our two hospitals for care and service.

The benefits of this proposed integration include the potential for improving clinical and service performance and overall business stability, resulting in a stronger future and a more stable employment outlook for both organizations.

Many may wonder how will this action will affect them? Here's how I would answer that question:

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To our staff - a strong, vibrant regional healthcare system will result in a brighter future and a more stable employment outlook for our hospital.

To our physicians – by operating as part of an integrated healthcare system we will be better able to acquire state-of-the-art medical technology and resources to support your work in caring for patients.

And to the community - as part of a regional healthcare system with increased resources, we will be able to provide access to an expanded range of high quality services through shared information, the recruitment and retention of clinical talent and the implementation of best practices and evidence-based medicine.

But most importantly, for all of us, this integration will mean that our hospital will be better positioned to prosper in today's challenging health care environment and compete in today's challenging economy.

For these reasons, we hope you join in our excitement as we prepare to create a new future for healthcare in our region.

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