SAVE OUR STATES

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The Honorable J.B. Pritzker
Governor of Illinois
207 State House
Springfield, IL 62706

Governor Pritzker,

This year, my organization launched "Healthcare Betrayal," which shines a light on tax-exempt hospitals and health systems that have misguided priorities and appear to misuse taxpayer funds and other government benefits. I write to bring to your attention to findings from our newly released Nonprofit Hospital Accountability Report regarding Rush University Medical Center (Rush), one of Illinois' most prominent tax-exempt hospital systems.

Such large nonprofit hospitals receive enormous public benefits, including tax exemptions and government funding, with the understanding that they will prioritize patient care, including charity care. This public trust deserves oversight, particularly where taxpayer dollars are involved.

Our report documents a disturbing pattern at Rush University Medical Center. In 2017, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General found that Medicare overpaid Rush by $10.2 million "because the Hospital did not have adequate controls to prevent the incorrect billing of Medicare claims." More recently, in February 2024, Rush laid off employees citing "financial struggles" while declining to disclose how many workers lost their jobs.

At the same time, Rush continued to lavish benefits on executives. In 2024, President and CEO Dr. Omar Lateef received more than $3.6 million in compensation. Beyond that salary, Rush also provided him with a personal housing allowance and paid membership dues for the Economic Club of Chicago, Commercial Club, Chicago United, and the Chicago Club. The hospital also paid for a University Club membership for its Chief Development Officer. All this appears to be the common practice at this tax-exempt hospital. Documents from two years earlier show Rush paid ten employees seven-figure salaries, including nearly $2.9 million to Dr. Lateef.

The spending does not stop there. According to Rush's tax records, the nonprofit had more than $167.8 million in overseas investments and partnerships in fiscal year 2024 while simultaneously expanding high-profile partnerships with professional sports franchises, including as the official healthcare partner of the Chicago White Sox. During roughly the same period, auditors reported that Rush spent more than $194 million in federal awards through dozens of government programs.

These findings are especially concerning given that, under your leadership, Rush University Medical Center has received more than $74,957,849 in state funding since fiscal year 2020 (according to the Office of the Illinois Comptroller). In fiscal year 2024 alone, Rush received more than $10,473,813 in state taxpayer dollars. Additionally, in Illinois, hospitals like Rush qualify for an exemption from property taxes, a significant savings for a system that recently reported a book value of more than $1.2 million in buildings and more than $34 million in land.

This raises a simple, but important question: Were you aware that during your time in office, nearly $75 million in state funds have been directed to Rush University Medical while the institution maintained a pattern of multimillion-dollar salaries and luxury perks for executives even as it engaged in employee layoffs?

Illinois taxpayers deserve to know whether state dollars are supporting patient care or simply subsidizing an institution's out-of-step spending priorities. Tax-exempt status is a privilege, not an entitlement, and taxpayer funding carries with it an obligation to operate with transparency, responsibility, and accountability.

I urge your administration to review the state's financial relationship with Rush University Medical Center, as well as other major non-profit hospitals, and determine what additional oversight is warranted. Illinois taxpayers deserve to know that public funds are not supporting lavish executive perks while frontline healthcare workers lose their jobs.

We hope our report is a valuable resource as your administration evaluates whether Illinois' nonprofit hospitals are fulfilling their mission and living up to the public trust that is the reason for their substantial tax advantages and direct taxpayer funding.

We look forward to your response and welcome the opportunity to discuss these findings with you and your staff.

Sincerely and cordially,

Trent England

Trent England
Executive Director
Save Our States