



To the community,

Since Wellstar Health System made the difficult decision to close Atlanta Medical Center, others have attempted to define our organization as discriminatory. You deserve to hear the facts and we'd like to share them with you. Wellstar's mission is to enhance the health and well-being of every person we serve. **Wellstar does not and has not discriminated against patients or communities of color—any suggestion otherwise is shameful and patently false.**

Wellstar Health System is a non-profit health system that cares for every person who needs us, regardless of race, socioeconomic status or ability to pay. Our determination to deliver care to all means we provide more uncompensated healthcare services than any other health system in the State of Georgia. In fact, we are one of the top ten charity care systems in the nation. Last year alone, Wellstar's uncompensated and charity care totaled \$1.2 billion.

This is who we are. Which is why we must set the record straight about why Wellstar had to close AMC and why we are exploring options in Augusta.

Wellstar acquired Atlanta Medical Center and Atlanta Medical Center South in 2016 and immediately began investing in them. In fact, **we invested more than \$350 million** to purchase new technology, hire more staff and doctors, build new operating rooms, replace critical infrastructure like boilers and elevators, and support operating losses. However, those investments could not change the financial trajectory of AMC. AMC was not simply "losing money." The amount of the losses and the facility replacement costs could have threatened the sustainability of the entire health system. We could not save AMC alone, so we asked for help.

Our efforts to find another health system partner and work with government officials to find a solution started well before our decision was announced to close AMC in 2022. We spent more than two years trying to do so. This included direct discussions with policymakers in Fulton County as early as February 2020. Unfortunately, local policymakers did not provide any support to AMC as they rightly have with Grady. Also in early 2020, we announced a public search for a partner or a buyer, but no local, regional or national system saw a path forward at AMC. They too saw its challenges as insurmountable.

Wellstar's closure of AMC was the incredibly sad result of the current economics of healthcare and the refusal of local health systems and local government agencies to provide any assistance to keep AMC open.

We deeply understand and honor the important role Atlanta Medical Center played for so many community members and share the pain and loss associated with its closure. These difficult circumstances and ongoing community discussions should not give license to some politicians to attack an entire health system — home to 24,000 employees and caregivers — to score cheap political points. It is wrong and does nothing to solve the healthcare challenges that face our communities, state, and nation.

Wellstar exists to serve all Georgians. We are an organization committed to health equity and eliminating health disparities—that is who we have been and will always be. We will continue to partner with the communities we serve to advance our vision of delivering world-class healthcare to every person, every time.

Sincerely,



Candice L. Saunders
PRESIDENT & CEO, WELLSTAR HEALTH SYSTEM



O. Scott Swayze, MD
CHAIR, WELLSTAR BOARD OF TRUSTEES



Frank Ros
VICE CHAIR, WELLSTAR BOARD OF TRUSTEES