



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

New York State Senator Malcolm A. Smith Calls For Formal Investigation Into Peninsula Hospital Center Closure

MALCOLM A. SMITH August 7, 2011



New York State Senator Malcolm A. Smith and other elected officials joined outraged community, civic and local residents in a press conference to announce a formal investigation into the imminent closure of Peninsula Hospital Center.

"I am urging the State Health Department, NYS Attorney General and the NYS Comptroller's Office to suspend accepting the closing plan until a formal investigation and audit is complete," said Senator Smith. "This closure can potentially cause irreparable harm to a community already facing many challenges. Peninsula Hospital Center renders all levels of health care service through its community-oriented Family Health Center, providing over 35,000 patient visits each year. It is documented that Peninsula Hospital Center emergency room care services over 30,000 patients a year and the hospital itself employs roughly 1,000 people. With the recent hospital closings in Queens, strains on existing hospital staff will persist, and the increasing number of local residents will find themselves with few alternatives for medical treatment. We must examine exactly how we structure and design our state's hospitals. In the past few years we have seen more than our fair- share of hospital closures throughout this city and state. It is

imperative that we redesign and redefine the process required to keep hospitals thriving in our community. Peninsula Hospital Center is in the heart of a vibrant community. It is completely unacceptable to even consider terminating such vital services to our community and limiting access to care that is greatly needed,” continued Senator Smith. “While I understand the financial concerns involving the decision to close, the medical needs of the residents of Queens warrant a review and investigation of all possible alternatives, including potential restructuring, consolidation and mergers, or a scaling back of services. Closure of Peninsula Hospital Center could jeopardize the health and well-being of many Far Rockaway residents that depend on the services.

Congressman Gregory Meeks said: “At a time when the Rockaway Peninsula is revitalizing itself, it is almost inconceivable for Peninsula Hospital Center to be closing in a few days. The fact that all stakeholders did not have advance knowledge of the debt and fiscal crisis of the hospital is disconcerting and raises serious questions. Peninsula Hospital is too vital to the healthcare and economic revitalization of the Peninsula to let these concerns go unanswered. I join Senator Malcolm Smith and the State delegation in asking Attorney General Eric Schneiderman to investigate the proposed closing, and also in asking that Comptroller Tom DiNapoli review all books and records of the hospital.”

Assemblywoman Michele Titus said: “The closing of the Peninsula Hospital Center will be a detriment to the Far Rockaway community and will result in loss of care to community residents that so aptly need access to care. This will also have an economic impact with the loss of jobs that will inevitably affect the Queens Community. I join Senator Malcolm Smith and other Queens elected officials in the call for an imminent investigation into the closing of this facility.”

City Councilman Ruben Wills said: “The effect of this decision on our community, particularly the neighborhood of Far Rockaway is massive. Peninsula Hospital is an anchor and institution for our neighborhoods. The health and welfare of the people in this area, and the economic impact of the closing of vital services for the many families of Southeast Queens is deeply troubling.”

Peninsula Hospital Center is the only hospital in the Rockaways and South Queens with the New York State Department of Health Stroke Center designation, providing a wide range of services, providing meaningful jobs and offering all the components of quality healthcare found in a strategic community hospital.

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Malcolm A. Smith is the New York State Senate Immediate Past President Pro Tempore (2008-10). He currently serves as Secretary of the NYS Democratic Conference and ranking member on the Banking Committee.