



Dear Council President Lori Boyer,

The quality of a trauma center is measured by its patient care and by medical proficiency and affordability. Studies show that when trauma centers operate too close to each other, outcomes suffer and health care costs rise for hospitals, patients and the surrounding communities. We are calling on your support for a shared vision for trauma services in Florida — one that produces the best patient outcomes while not adding the burden of extraordinary health care costs to its citizens. That vision centers on a trauma system that provides the best care for severely injured patients in *regionalized* programs.

A legally questionable decision by the Florida Department of Health to prematurely open a new trauma center in Orange Park — owned and operated by the billion-dollar industry giant HCA Holdings Inc. — is likely to substantially affect UF Health Jacksonville and the overall health care landscape in the Jacksonville area.

Most health care industry experts, research centers and medical journals agree that patients are virtually guaranteed better outcomes at high-volume trauma centers such as UF Health Jacksonville's Level I facility. As a result of the Department of Health's decision, trauma patients who would otherwise receive care at UF Health Jacksonville are now being diverted to a lower level trauma center at Orange Park Medical Center. This change is detrimental to an inclusive trauma system and negatively affects our community in the following ways:

- The additional trauma center increases the number of cases coded as "trauma," thereby **needlessly increasing the cost of health care to Florida taxpayers.**
- Those who indeed have significant trauma are being diverted away from an existing Level I Trauma Center with a proven record of outstanding outcomes for more than 30 years. This diversion results in a **waste of resources, poor quality of emergency care and a reduction in the proficiency of the highly qualified trauma teams** already in place at UF Health Jacksonville.
- The sheer geography of the two trauma centers will cause a redistribution of trauma cases such that relatively more patients with penetrating trauma, who are more likely to be uninsured or underinsured, would be taken to UF Health Jacksonville, and relatively more patients with blunt trauma, who tend to be insured, would be taken to Orange Park Medical Center. A loss in trauma cases at UF Health Jacksonville will significantly reduce revenues associated with those cases and **threaten the financial viability of the hospital's trauma service.**

New research in the medical journal *Health Affairs* shows that when an elderly person could be properly seen in an emergency room but instead, as some for-profit hospitals like those owned by HCA have done, is classified as a trauma patient simply because of his or her age — not because of the severity of the injury — they pay as much as 40 percent more without a better outcome.

In UF Health Jacksonville's petition for formal administrative proceedings to contest the preliminary decision allowing HCA to proceed, the Level I Trauma Center challenged the Florida Department of Health's approval on HCA's application for a provisional Level II Trauma Center and that HCA is not authorized to offer trauma services until the administrative proceeding is completed.

In the challenge, UF Health Jacksonville contended that the Department of Health violated a state rule that calls for only one trauma center in a five-county area made up of Duval, Clay, St. Johns, Baker and Nassau counties.

Nevertheless, on April 28, 2016, the Department authorized HCA to begin offering Level II trauma services to the public at Orange Park Medical Center in Clay County, despite the absence of an additional trauma position or "slot" being made available within Rule 64J-2.010.

The success of UF Health Jacksonville is vital to our community. We are focused on serving the First Coast's most critical medical needs and creating patient-centered access to health care for all area residents. Unlike HCA's profit-model Orange Park trauma center, UF Health Jacksonville is a not-for-profit hospital dedicated to expanding medical research and providing lifesaving medical care for all patients, regardless of their ability to pay.



How can you help? We ask that you stand with UF Health Jacksonville as we continue to work against rising health care costs, wasteful medical resources created to generate profits, and low-quality trauma care for those in critical need. By publicly showing support for UF Health Jacksonville in your next meeting and by writing an open letter of support in this legal matter, the Jacksonville City Council will help to ensure that we are able to offer high-quality patient care and ongoing medical advancement as we continue to better our community for years to come.

We encourage you to address all letters of support to:

Leah A. Colston

Bureau of Emergency Medical Oversight Division of Emergency Preparedness and Community Support

Florida Department of Health

4042 Bald Cypress Way

Tallahassee, FL 32399-1747

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Russ".

Russ Armistead

CEO, UF Health Jacksonville

Lecturer, Office of Senior VP, Health Affairs, University of Florida

Phone: (904) 244-3002

Email: russ.armistead@jax.ufl.edu