



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING  
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW  
WASHINGTON, DC 20004

VINCENT C. GRAY  
CHAIRMAN

March 29, 2010

Mr. Harrison J. Rider III  
Interim President  
Washington Hospital Center  
Administration Office  
110 Irving Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20010

Dear Mr. Rider:

I am writing to communicate my deep concern and disappointment in the recent discipline, suspension or termination of several Washington Hospital Center employees due to absences during the region's record-breaking February snowstorms. I have been advised that a number of additional employees continue to face internal investigations concerning these absences. I find these actions alarming and profoundly troubling. While I applaud the Hospital's commitment to optimum care and clinical excellence, it would appear that the Hospital's recent disciplinary actions were unwarranted.

I have been informed that the Hospital's "Declared Weather Emergency" policy does not identify termination as a consequence of absence and specifically states that such absences will not be used when addressing attendance issues. As such, the recent casting of all employees unable to make their shifts during the region's paralyzing snowstorms as uncommitted to the community, patients and associates paints with a very broad brush. One's commitment to excellence should not solely be measured by ability to weather unprecedented amounts of snow. I have heard from numerous constituents affected by these decisions, many of whom had childcare and eldercare needs, and all of whom cite impassable streets and lack of transportation as mitigating circumstances for their lack of attendance.

I am concerned that the Washington Hospital Center apparently was the only hospital in the region that experienced staffing problems or staff disciplinary actions during this emergency, which may raise questions about how the hospital manages staffing roles and responsibilities during disasters. I urge the Washington Hospital Center to revisit and rescind personnel decisions made during the period February, 5 through February, 11. I also encourage the Hospital to employ a comprehensive and clearly articulated emergency operations plan that plainly delineates expectations and provides adequate direction for staff during emergencies.

Please keep me advised of all developments in this area. I look forward to a favorable response as we pursue our common goal of providing open and honest leadership as we advance health and care for the people we serve.

Sincerely,

*Vincent C. Gray*  
Vincent C. Gray

cc: Kenneth Samet, President and CEO, MedStar Health

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