

August 25, 2021

Via E-Mail: ljordan@fayetteville-ar.gov

Mayor Lioneld Jordan
City of Fayetteville
113 W. Mountain Street
Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701

Via E-Mail: martisharkey@cox.net

Marti Sharkey, M.D.
City Health Officer
City of Fayetteville
113 W. Mountain Street
Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701

Dear Mayor Jordan and Dr. Sharkey:

I write on behalf of Washington Regional Medical Center to request that the City of Fayetteville postpone its annual Bikes, Blues and BBQ motorcycle rally. To hold such an event at a moment when our region's healthcare systems are overwhelmed responding to the latest surge in hospitalizations resulting from the Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus is to invite disaster. In short, our region's hospitals have no way to accommodate the additional traumas that always occasion that event, let alone the additional COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations that are likely to accompany an event where 300,000 congregate in close proximity. Today, like many days of late, every Emergency Department in our region is at capacity. We have many patients awaiting admission for beds that don't currently exist. Our Critical Care units are at capacity and that is for COVID and non-COVID patients alike. This status has been present for several weeks now with little hope for relief. The forecast released this week by the Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health does not predict any significant let-up prior to the time of BBB.

Historically, our hospital has ramped up our Emergency Department and Trauma staff to cover BB&B related cases. We simply don't have the luxury of doing that this year. All our available staff are already working way beyond normal capacities to deal with the pandemic surge. As we warned our community on July 21st, 2021, our healthcare systems are at capacity and there is significant likelihood that we will be unable to accommodate the usual incidence of traumas, strokes and other emergent conditions that regularly occur within our community. The



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additional volumes realized in a normal year of BB&B make that all the more likely.

While we all have grown weary of public health restrictions, we can't ignore the fact that our region is now at the height of this public health emergency. Our staff are pushed to the limit NOW. Adding the additional patients that will inevitably come with BB&B will push us beyond that limit. Understand that we are the region's only Level 2 trauma center and the only Comprehensive Stroke Center outside of Little Rock. There will be no way to provide the level of care required by our community if the City pushes forward with this event. We are currently at the darkest hour of this public health emergency. Our staff is exhausted. The message being sent by our City regarding the City's priorities if this event is permitted to move forward couldn't be more tone deaf.

Sincerely,



David G. Ratcliff, MD
Chief Medical Officer
Patient Safety Officer
Washington Regional Medical Center

DGR:nm