ONA aft
A Union of Nurses & Health Professionals

Affiliated with AFL-CIO

June 22, 2026

City of Delaware City Council,

This isn't just about one hospital unit. This is about whether Delaware County is moving toward greater access to care or becoming another example of the maternity care crisis unfolding across Ohio and the nation.

According to the March of Dimes, more than one-third of U.S. counties are now considered maternity care deserts, and hospital closures and reductions in obstetric services are forcing families to travel farther for essential maternity care. Women living in areas with limited maternity access experience worse outcomes, including higher rates of preterm birth and inadequate prenatal care.

Ohio is not immune. March of Dimes reports that 6.5% of Ohio women already do not have a birthing hospital within 30 minutes of where they live. Morrow County is already considered a maternity care desert. If this closure is allowed to move forward, Delaware County risks moving in the same direction. What a travesty that would be for families across this region.

The consequences of reducing maternity care access are especially concerning because Ohio already struggles with poor maternal and infant health outcomes. According to the March of Dimes 2025 Report Card, Ohio received a D grade for preterm births, ranks 37th nationally for preterm birth rates, and ranks 48th in the nation for infant mortality. At a time when our state is already facing serious challenges in maternal and infant health, eliminating maternity services is moving in exactly the wrong direction.

This closure also reflects a larger and deeply troubling pattern of healthcare consolidation occurring across Ohio and the country. Large healthcare systems continue to acquire community hospitals and local healthcare services, often promising efficiencies and improved access. Yet too often, communities experience the opposite. Consolidation frequently results in fewer healthcare options, reduced competition, higher healthcare costs, and the elimination of essential services that may not meet corporate financial expectations. Decisions that once were made locally become centralized and driven by priorities far removed from the communities they affect.

Delaware County is one of the fastest-growing counties in Ohio. This community should be gaining healthcare services, not losing them. Yet OhioHealth's decision would leave families with fewer choices for maternity care, longer travel times, and greater barriers to accessing care when every minute matters. The closure of this maternity unit is not an isolated event—it is part of a broader trend that has left many communities with fewer options, higher costs, and worse health outcomes.

And let's talk about the reality on the ground.

A nurse recently left Grady Memorial Hospital at approximately 7:30 in the morning and drove to Riverside Methodist Hospital. The trip took 70 minutes.

Seventy minutes.

Not during a snowstorm. Not during a natural disaster. During a normal weekday morning commute.

Now imagine making that trip while in active labor. Imagine making that trip with ruptured membranes, severe bleeding, preeclampsia, fetal distress, or another obstetrical emergency. Imagine being told that the closest maternity unit serving your community has been closed because a healthcare corporation decided it no longer fit its business plan.

The nurses who provide care in this unit have more than 500 years of combined service and experience. They have dedicated their careers to caring for mothers, babies, and families in this community. If this closure is allowed to move forward, it will devastate the community, and it could be decades before these services are restored.

As a nurse, the word "breech" has a specific meaning. A breech delivery occurs when a baby is not positioned head first. It creates additional risk and requires careful intervention to protect both mother and child.

Today, Delaware County is facing a different kind of breech.

When OhioHealth assumed control of Grady Memorial Hospital, commitments were made to this community. Those commitments helped justify transferring control of a community hospital to a large healthcare system. Yet today, OhioHealth is moving to eliminate a vital service that this growing community depends upon.

That is a breach of trust.

And if OhioHealth is failing to live up to the promises made in its affiliation agreement, then it raises serious questions about whether it is also in breach of the commitments it made to the people of Delaware County.

A breech delivery places a mother and baby at risk. A breach of trust by a dominant healthcare system places an entire community at risk.

The people of Delaware County deserve answers. They deserve accountability. And they deserve a healthcare system that keeps its promises.

We urge you to do everything in your power to delay and stop this closure for the good of the community and for the health and well-being of every patient who needs timely access to vital care.

Rick Lucas

Rick Lucas BSN, RN, CCRN
ONA President

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FACT SHEET: SAVE GRADY MATERNITY CARE

Closing Grady's Maternity Unit Will Put Mothers and Babies at Risk

For families across Delaware, Morrow, and surrounding counties, maternity care is not a convenience—it is a lifeline.

The proposed closure of Grady Memorial Hospital's maternity unit would force expectant mothers to travel farther for prenatal care, labor and delivery services, and emergency obstetric care at a time when Ohio is already facing a maternal health crisis.

The Facts

- Morrow County is classified as a maternity care desert by the March of Dimes.
- More than one-third (35.1%) of U.S. counties are maternity care deserts.
- Nearly two-thirds of maternity care deserts are located in rural communities.
- Approximately 2.3 million women of childbearing age live in maternity care deserts nationwide.
- In Ohio, 18.2% of counties are maternity care deserts, and another 18.2% have low or moderate access to maternity care.
- Ohio has experienced some of the nation's steepest declines in maternity care access in recent years.

Morrow County Is Already a Maternity Care Desert

A maternity care desert is a county with no hospital or birth center offering obstetric care and no obstetric providers.

For many families, Grady Memorial Hospital is the closest and most accessible location for maternity care. Closing this unit would deepen an existing healthcare gap and leave pregnant patients with even fewer options.

Longer Drives Mean Greater Risks

We timed the drive from Morrow County to Riverside Methodist Hospital at approximately 70 minutes when departing at 7:30 a.m. under normal traffic conditions.

That estimate does not account for rush-hour congestion, road construction, severe weather, accidents, or delays arranging childcare or transportation.

Now imagine making that drive:

- During active labor, with contractions every few minutes.
- While experiencing severe bleeding.
- With signs of preeclampsia, including dangerously high blood pressure.
- After your water breaks unexpectedly.
- During a winter storm or heavy traffic.
- With other children at home and limited transportation options.

Obstetric emergencies do not wait.

Every additional mile creates more risk for mothers and babies.

Babies Don't Wait for Hospital Consolidation Plans

Labor can progress rapidly. Complications such as placental abruption, umbilical cord prolapse, postpartum hemorrhage, shoulder dystocia, and fetal distress require immediate intervention.

A 70-minute drive can mean the difference between a routine delivery and a medical emergency.

Research shows that when rural hospitals close maternity units, patients are more likely to delay prenatal care, deliver outside their home communities, and experience worse maternal and infant outcomes.

No family should be forced to choose between delivering safely and driving an hour or more to access care.

Rural Communities Deserve Better

When hospitals close maternity units, the impacts extend far beyond labor and delivery:

- Reduced access to prenatal and postpartum care.
- Increased maternal and infant health risks.
- Greater strain on emergency departments and EMS services.
- Longer travel times for routine appointments.
- Increased financial and emotional burdens on families.

- Increased risk of births occurring in ambulances, emergency departments, or at home without adequate support.

Rural communities already face significant healthcare challenges. Eliminating local maternity care only makes those challenges worse.

OhioHealth Must Put Patients Before Profits

OhioHealth promotes its commitment to compassionate, community-based care.

Closing Grady's maternity unit would abandon that commitment.

Healthcare systems have a responsibility to serve their communities—not withdraw essential services from rural families in pursuit of consolidation and cost savings.

If OhioHealth closes Grady's maternity unit, families in Morrow County and surrounding communities will pay the price with longer drives, fewer options, and greater risks during one of life's most vulnerable moments.

OhioHealth should invest in Grady's maternity unit—not close it.

Our Message Is Simple

No mother should have to drive 70 minutes to deliver her baby.

No rural family should lose access to essential maternity care.

No community should become a maternity care desert because a healthcare system chose consolidation over care.

Save Grady Maternity.

Sources

- March of Dimes, "Nowhere to Go: Maternity Care Deserts Across the U.S." (2024)
- March of Dimes PeriStats, Ohio Maternity Care Access Data (2025)
- Health Services Research, "The Effect of Rural Hospital Closures on Maternal and Infant Health" (2024)
- Journal of Advanced Nursing, "Rural Hospital and Obstetric Unit Closures as Social Determinants of Maternal Health Disparities" (2024)