From: Hayley Place
To: City Council Email; Council Clerk
Subject: Grady OB closure city counsel statement
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Good evening,

My name is Hayley, and I am a Labor and Postpartum Nurse at Grady Family Birthplace.
Last week, I learned that the volunteer community board voted to close Grady's Labor and Delivery unit. Like many members of this community, I am left asking: Why?

Why would a rapidly growing community like Delaware choose to eliminate access to local maternity care and women's health services? The hospital has stated that fewer than 10% of Delaware County babies were delivered at Grady last year. But instead of accepting that statistic as justification for closure, we should be asking why is that number low, and what can we do to improve it?

Demand for maternity care is not disappearing. Birth volumes at Grady Family Birthplace increased by 17% from 2024 to 2025, while Delaware continues to grow.

According to the March of Dimes, access to a birthing hospital should be within 14.4 minutes of a patient's home. Hospitals located 23-38 minutes away are considered low access or maternity deserts. This closure will affect not only Delaware County residents, but also families in surrounding communities who rely on Grady.

We are told mothers are choosing to deliver elsewhere because of a shift in patient preference. However, as someone who works directly with expecting families, I can tell you many choose those hospitals because they offer resources such as NICUs/ special care nursery where mom does not have to be separated from her newborn. The question is: Why aren't those opportunities being developed here in Delaware?

How can we say we support mothers while asking them to travel 30, 45, or even 60 minutes for access to a birthing hospital.

Babies do not wait.
Obstetric emergencies do not wait.

When a mother arrives at 27 weeks pregnant and delivers within minutes, there is no time to drive elsewhere. In those moments, specialized Labor and Delivery care saves lives.

Labor and Delivery is a specialty staffed by professionals trained to care for mothers and babies during critical emergencies. With this closure, Delaware loses that expertise and more than 500 years of combined OB experience from one small hospital floor.

This decision risks reducing access to maternity care at a time when maternal healthcare services are already declining across the country. Reduced access is associated with poorer outcomes for mothers and babies, especially when every minute matters.

I have cared for women who came to us because we were the closest and safest option. I have cared for families during some of the most vulnerable moments of their lives. I have seen the value of personalized care to the community.

The hospital states their mission is to improve the health of those it serves. Yet, come July 31st we are moving backwards. How will this affect those seeking Delaware as their home?

Too often, healthcare conversations focus on bulidings, amenities and revenue. But quality care is not determined by a building. It is determined by the people at the bedside, safe staffing ratios, and professionals whose sole focus is caring for mothers and babies.
Can an Emergency Department provide excellent emergency care? Absolutely. But can it replace a dedicated Labor and Delivery unit while caring for every other emergency that comes through its doors? That is a question our community deserves to consider carefully.
In my opinion this closure represents a significant loss to our community.

Grady Family Birthplace is more than a delivery unit. We were a trusted resource for women and families and a place where patients felt safe and supported.
I ask our leaders and decision-makers to consider not only what is being lost today, but what Grady Family Birthplace could become with the investment and resources needed to grow alongside our Delaware community.

At Grady, the patients were always more to us than another number on the unit board. They were members of our community who more importantly turned into families we got to watch keep growing.

Thank you.

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https://www.marchofdimes.org/maternity-care-deserts-report