



Meet and Greet with Federal Officials

Drafted 8/2/21

WHEN

The Wellstar Meet and Greet with federal officials will be held Monday, Aug. 9, 2021, and the indoor portion of the program will begin around 4:25 p.m.

ORDER FOR THE SESSION

- 4:25 p.m. Usher attendees inside, get seated and connect w/ Zoom participants
- 4:35 p.m. Welcome and Introductions by Government Relations Team
- 4:50 p.m. Leo discusses pandemic response and federal issues
- 5:00 p.m. Leo/Mary final wrap-up with any Q&A

Welcome & System Overview – Mary Chatman (10 minutes)

- Good afternoon and thanks for joining us today. It is truly a pleasure to have each of you here with us.
- Wellstar is honored to work closely with many of you and to serve our communities in meaningful ways. Thank you for your support.
- I would like to take a few minutes to share the latest information with you from Wellstar Health System.
- After I have shared the highlights with you, Leo will speak for a few moments about our pandemic response and a few details on specific issues.

Wellstar Health System Overview

Mission, Vision & Values

- Wellstar is nationally ranked and locally recognized for our high-quality care, inclusive culture, and exceptional doctors and caregivers. We are guided by our Mission, Vision and Values:
 - **Our Mission** is to *enhance the health and well-being of every person we serve.*
 - **Our Vision** is to *deliver world-class healthcare to every person, every time.*
 - **Our Values** are: *We serve with compassion. We pursue excellence. We honor every voice.*



- From 11 hospitals to more than 300 medical offices and 17 urgent care centers, we are committed to providing compassionate, expert healthcare close to home.
- Nine of our hospitals are safety net hospitals and provide care regardless of a person's insurance status or ability to pay.

Unreimbursed Care

- As a caring neighbor, it's our responsibility and privilege to provide the highest level of personalized care to individuals and families across a wide geographic footprint.
- Wellstar is a nonprofit network of interconnected hospitals, health parks, urgent care centers and medical offices. We provide patients with the services and resources they need to make the best healthcare decisions for themselves and their families.
- We serve with an eye to value and consistency— delivering the same high level of service at every site in every community. That is what “More than Healthcare. PeopleCare.” is all about.
- **In 2020, Wellstar provided \$922 million in unreimbursed care.** This figure reflects a large portfolio of community programs in schools, libraries, and other settings. It covers unreimbursed charity care for those who are unable to pay. It also includes state and federal reimbursement shortfalls in covering the cost of care under Medicare and Medicaid for their beneficiaries.

WCHE and addressing social disparities/health inequities

- Addressing social disparities and health inequities at a grassroots level has an overall positive impact on our communities and our health system: If we can enhance the health and well-being of people, that can have a positive impact on chronic diseases and emergency care needs.
- In response to long-standing, critical community health inequities and social disparities affecting people and communities across the state, Wellstar Health System – one of the largest and most integrated healthcare systems in Georgia – launched the Wellstar Center for Health Equity (WCHE).
- The WCHE is an extension of Wellstar's long history of community engagement and allyship to provide people-centric care and was formed to convene, activate, and support community partners and advocates to address, impact, and drive lasting change at a grassroots level.

- Georgia not only has the highest maternal mortality rate in the nation, but substance abuse, cancer, and suicide also take the lives of far too many people throughout the state.
- Many Georgians are one job loss or medical crisis away from homelessness and food insecurity and more than half a million children in Georgia don't have consistent access to nutritious food.
- The WCHE focuses on primary community needs informed by Wellstar's triennial Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), completed in 2019. Wellstar used the insights from the study to identify the predominant areas of need to structure the WCHE around six strategic domains:
 - Primary Care
 - Behavioral Health
 - Food Insecurity
 - Suicide
 - Cancer
 - Women's Health
- Each of these strategic domains connects to Wellstar medical service lines to bring to bear the deep expertise and broad bench of resources needed to identify pertinent needs, relevant partnerships, and viable programs.
- Through our more than 450 unique community partnerships, we are proud to invest in community-based programs and centers of excellence that ensure access to care and resources when, where, and how it works for people in the region.
- While we remain focused on the priority needs identified in our CHNA, we are also committed to being nimble to support emerging community needs, such as our quick response to provide family COVID testing with the Congregational Health Network and local public health authorities in at-risk neighborhoods. Through these partnerships, we also distributed thousands of COVID-19 safety kits with bilingual safety cards in the communities we serve.
- In partnership with **Goodr**, an organization that provides food resources for people in need, and funded in part by Wellstar Foundation donations, the **Wellstar Center for Health Equity "Mobile Market"** hosts "pop-up" farmers' markets in seven communities, feeding over 700 families monthly.
 - Clients pre-register for the events and can choose items that are culturally sensitive and appealing to their households.



- To adhere to the CDC's social distancing measures, Goodr revamped its traditional pop-up experience to provide a quick, safe way for families to walk or drive through the event and select free groceries.
- To address the need for accessible COVID-19 testing, the Wellstar Community Health team and selected community partners provide clients with PCR tests.
- By creating equitable and consistent food access points with healthy options, Wellstar hopes to break down barriers that create nutrition disparity and food insecurity, while enhancing the wellness of the people and communities we serve.
- Another example of our partnerships includes our community safety-net clinics, which provide medically underserved individuals with wellness exams, vaccinations, and medication counseling. We also offer reduced-cost outpatient services in partnership with community-based clinics throughout our service area.
- These important initiatives are partially **funded by the Wellstar Foundation**, and we welcome community support for this program and others to address health inequities.

Closing

- I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely **thank you for being here with us today** to learn more about Wellstar and the communities we serve. We are thankful to each of you for your public service and leadership. It is a pleasure to be able to meet you in person today.
- Now I'd like to turn the program over to Leo Reichert, EVP and General Counsel for our System. Many of you know Leo and we are grateful for the leadership Leo provides. He has been very close to our pandemic relief efforts and will speak on that as well as address a few key issues that are top of mind.

Wellstar Pandemic Response & Federal Issues – Leo Reichert (10 minutes)

Pandemic Response

- Thank you, Mary, and thanks to everyone for joining us today.
- To date, we have cared for more than 57,000 COVID-19-positive patients and more than 115,000 PUIs. During the peak in the winter, we had several sustained weeks of more than 130% capacity across most of the system and were caring for more than 800 COVID-positive and PUI patients per day.
- With the Delta variant on the rise, we are asking community members to get the vaccine, practice the 3Ws, and get tested. The variant is the dominant strain. It is highly



contagious and spreading fast. We acknowledge that this puts added strain on our nurses and physicians who are already caring for many sick patients, with COVID and other health conditions.

- When the pandemic began, a nationwide nursing shortage was already in place. As the pandemic unfolds, we continue to demonstrate that we recognize our people are at the core of who we are and how we fulfill our mission.
- While we already offered many health and wellness resources, the pandemic provided the opportunity for us to hone our team member support, and we were able to offer personalized resources quickly.
- The pandemic has changed the needs of our workforce, and we are not aiming to get back to the previous staffing level. We recognize that our models of care will need to change to meet the needs of our patients and community. The baseline for the level of distress is higher, and it may take more to support our caregivers so we must adapt.
- Our team members continue to provide world-class care for patients and communities even when it requires long hours and extra shifts. We are fully committed to offsetting the additional workload and hiring contractors and recruiters to bring in hundreds of new team members.
- Even with these steps, we need to take more steps to support our clinical teams, and we are continually sharing information and asking for feedback from our team members.
- As a large healthcare system, we have the benefit of having a **robust infrastructure** to respond to the pandemic.
- We operate from a formal emergency preparedness infrastructure called the Hospital Incident Command (HICS) that begins at the corporate level with key leaders from Operations, Communication, Lab, Pharmacy, Physician practices, and the like. The role of the corporate HICS is to be the clearing house for data tracking (including workforce management, and standardization of practices and policies. We use an Epic-based dashboard that allows us to closely monitor the trends.
- With advanced planning, we have expanded our capacity at each of our facilities, particularly ICU capacity, when needed to meet the needs of our communities.
- Because we are a large health system, we are also able to redistribute resources in hotspots and rural areas.



- Since the very beginning of the pandemic, we have held regular community briefings with elected officials and community leaders to share the latest data and trends. Our partnerships in the community have enabled us to share valuable information and to offer support when needed. And we will continue to be here as we navigate any surges we experience.

Economic Impact

- The prolonged pandemic has created the single most significant challenge for our system and the entire healthcare sector. While the overall effects of the crisis are ongoing, the most substantial impact on our financial stability occurred during the initial stages of the pandemic, from March to June 2020.
- We were grateful that CARES Act reimbursement covered a portion of the revenue losses (\$323.4 million) during this period, however, the relief funding we received and recognized (\$120.7 million) covered less than half of the financial gap we experienced in that period.
- This required us to implement unprecedented resiliency initiatives starting last spring – including temporary furloughs, capital expenditure reductions, and other cost-saving measures – to maintain our financial stability and recover some (\$137 million) of the lost revenue.
- We were pleased to receive additional reimbursement funding (\$120.1 million) during the first half of fiscal year 2021, to cover some of the unfunded prior fiscal year lost revenue.
- We are also thankful that patient volumes returned to near normal levels through the end of December and this, along with the resiliency measures taken by Wellstar last spring, allowed our system to stabilize financially and avoid further cuts or furloughs during this first half of our fiscal year 2021.
- Now early in fiscal year 2022, we anticipate that patient volumes will not quite return to pre-pandemic levels. So, we’re going to see a little bit of a revenue gap compared to historical levels. And we’ll have some higher residual expenses left over from the pandemic, as well.
- Maintaining the financial health of nonprofit healthcare systems like Wellstar is essential to the health of our communities as we continue to navigate the impacts of the ongoing pandemic. As Mary shared, Wellstar reinvests our operating income into our operations and communities and provided more than \$900 million in charity care,



unreimbursed care, and community programs in 2020 to help enhance the health and well-being of the people and communities we serve.

Federal Issues (GR will provide the details on these topics)

- Ongoing federal support to assist with response and recovery - Pandemic is not over, waiver flexibilities, surprise billing R&R
 - Importance of delaying cuts to the DSH program
 - Value of 340B and preservation of program
 - Constituent support handled by GR
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- We truly appreciate that you are here with us today. We are proud to partner with many of you here today and are grateful for this opportunity to get to know all of you better. We will now open it up for Q&A.

Wrap Up and Q&A at 5 p.m.