



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Teaching Hospitals

Broward Health

Jackson Health System

Mount Sinai
Medical Center

Orlando Health

UF Health Shands Hospital

UF Health Jacksonville

Tampa General Hospital

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Safety Net Hospital Alliance of Florida opposes dismantling of proven, nationally recognized trauma system

Editor's note: The Senate Committee on Health Policy will hear presentations on the trauma system from 1 to 2 p.m. Wednesday, March 22. The meeting will be aired live on the Florida Channel. For interviews with presenters Drs. David Ciesla and/or Robert Winchell, please contact Susan Thurston at susan.thurston@hkstrategies.com or (813) 775.6229.

Public Hospitals

Halifax Health

Lee Health

Memorial Healthcare System

Sarasota Memorial
Health Care System

TALLAHASSEE, Fla., March 22, 2017 – Safety Net Hospital Alliance of Florida officials today echoed comments by Dr. David Ciesla that the state's trauma system is working well and dismantling it would be harmful and costly to patients in Florida.

Speaking before the Senate Committee on Health Policy Wednesday, Dr. Ciesla, Regional Trauma Medical Director and Tampa General Hospital trauma surgeon, said "Florida's trauma system model is recognized as one of the best in the nation for ensuring residents with severe injuries have timely access to quality trauma care."

Safety Net officials have long opposed legislative efforts to dismantle Florida's trauma system. This year's bills – SB 746 and HB 1077 – would repeal the 19 designated trauma service areas and eliminate the statewide trauma center cap of 44.

Children's Hospitals

Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital

Nicklaus Children's Hospital

Under the current system, Floridians have access to trauma care far above the national average. Trauma centers are strategically located throughout the state to ensure fast response times to highly trained and experienced critical care surgeons and trauma teams. No objective data exists indicating that Florida's severely injured adults or children were not able to be treated in trauma centers.

Regional Perinatal Intensive
Care Center

Sacred Heart Health System

"If my child were injured, I'd want her taken to the busiest trauma center, not the closest. It has been proven that patients have greater chances of survival and fewer post-injury complications at busy trauma centers treating a diverse, complex array of injuries," said Lindy Kennedy, executive vice president of the Safety Net Hospital Alliance of Florida. "Opening the floodgates to more trauma centers would reduce the number of patients treated in every trauma center, compromising experience and proficiency of surgeons and trauma teams for a false sense of proximity benefit. Adding trauma centers may sound appealing, but this is one case where more is not better."

Anthony Carvalho

President

Demonstrating this are the recent mass casualty incidents in Florida. Dozens of lives were saved because Orlando Regional Medical Center, Lee Memorial Hospital and Broward Health Medical Center had skilled trauma teams that were gloves-on ready and experienced to handle such an unfortunate crisis. These hospitals also provide a superior training ground for future trauma surgeons and the critical care specialists needed to help fill Florida's shortage of physicians.

"Dismantling our trauma system would also greatly exacerbate Florida's shortage of critical care doctors as the trauma centers located in teaching hospitals would be forced to either reduce their residency slots or eliminate graduate medical education programs altogether," Kennedy said.

Allowing unfettered expansion of trauma centers without consideration of patients' best interest or the capacity and sustainability of existing, nearby trauma centers would ignore national standards set by the American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma and throw away the state's investment in our nationally commended system.

Dr. Robert Winchell, past chair of the American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma who also presented to the Senate committee, was asked by the Florida Department of Health (DOH) to chair a study of Florida's trauma system, including the five trauma centers added between 2012 and 2014. His expert panel concluded that the state DOH should impose an immediate moratorium on approval of any new provisional or verified trauma centers until a new trauma system advisory committee could be established and a full assessment of the current system can be completed. Dr. Winchell proclaimed that leaving "vital public safety functions like trauma care to the vagaries of the free market" can have destabilizing effects on an entire system.

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