

# State Employees Association of North Carolina

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May 3, 2026

## **Wake County Board of Commissioners**

301 S. McDowell St., Suite 4000

Raleigh, NC 27601

Dear Chair Mial and Members of the Wake County Board of Commissioners:

### **Re: Proposed Sale of WakeMed Health & Hospitals to Atrium Health**

On behalf of the State Employees Association of North Carolina (SEANC) and the more than 46,000 current state employees, retirees, and their families we represent, I am writing to urge the Board of Commissioners to vote against the proposed sale of WakeMed Health & Hospitals to Atrium Health — or, at a minimum, to postpone any vote until the Board has held public listening sessions and conducted a thorough, transparent assessment of the long-term consequences of this transaction.

SEANC represents state employees and retirees across every county in North Carolina — tens of thousands of whom live and work in Wake County, rely on WakeMed for their care, and are enrolled in the State Health Plan. The decisions made in this chamber will directly affect those families' access to care and the cost of their coverage. We ask that their interests be given the weight they deserve.

### **Healthcare Consolidation Raises Costs for State Employees and All North Carolinians**

SEANC has long opposed the trend of hospital consolidation in North Carolina, and for good reason: the evidence is clear that when large health systems absorb independent or community hospitals, prices rise and competition disappears. As State Treasurer Brad Briner stated publicly this week, this level of consolidation is damaging to all healthcare plans — and the State Health Plan, which covers state employees and retirees across all 100 counties, will be among those harmed most directly if this transaction is approved.

Atrium Health is already one of the largest health systems in the Southeast, with reported executive compensation at extraordinary levels. Consolidation of this magnitude does not lower costs for patients or payers — it concentrates pricing power. When WakeMed's negotiating independence is eliminated, every insurance plan that covers Wake County residents will face significantly reduced leverage at the bargaining table. Those increased costs will flow directly to employees, retirees, and taxpayers.

### **We Have Seen This Before: The Novant-New Hanover Precedent**

SEANC participated in the public listening sessions held by New Hanover County before the sale of New Hanover Regional Medical Center to Novant Health. Those sessions gave citizens

and stakeholders an opportunity to be heard, and we commend New Hanover County for providing that forum. Regrettably, the sale proceeded — and Novant raised prices shortly after acquisition. The pattern is predictable and well-documented.

We are asking Wake County to learn from that experience. If this Board is committed to moving forward with any sale or partnership arrangement, we urge you to first hold formal public listening sessions — not merely a public comment period at a regularly scheduled meeting.

### **The State Health Plan Cannot Absorb These Costs**

The State Health Plan is already under significant financial pressure. State employees have not received pay commensurate with rising costs of living or healthcare inflation. A transaction that weakens the State Health Plan's negotiating position with a dominant regional provider will not affect only Wake County residents — it will ripple across the entire state plan, raising costs for the hundreds of thousands of state employees and retirees who rely on it. This is a statewide issue that deserves statewide scrutiny.

### **Our Request**

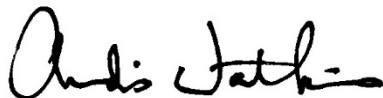
SEANC respectfully requests that the Wake County Board of Commissioners:

1. Vote against approval of the proposed sale at this time; or
2. Postpone any vote until the Board has held structured public listening sessions that allow patients, employees, healthcare advocates, and state plan stakeholders to present evidence and be heard on the record; and
3. Request an independent analysis of the projected impact of this transaction on insurance costs for the State Health Plan and other major payers operating in Wake County.

WakeMed has served this community for more than 50 years as a public, mission-driven health system. That is an asset that cannot be recovered once it is transferred. We urge this Board to take the time necessary to fully understand what is at stake before acting.

We are prepared to participate in any public forum and to provide additional information, data, or testimony as needed. I am available to speak with any member of the Board at your convenience.

Respectfully,



**Ardis Watkins**  
Executive Director  
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