


David Whitaker, Esq.
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Commission
Janese Chapman
Director, Historic Designation
Advisory Board

John Alexander
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Paige Blessman
M. Rory Bolger, Ph.D., FAICP
Victory Corley
Lisa DiChiera
Eric Fazzini, AICP
Willene Green
Christopher Gulock, AICP
Marcel Hurt, Esq.
Sandra Jeffers

City of Detroit
CITY COUNCIL
LEGISLATIVE POLICY DIVISION
208 Coleman A. Young Municipal Center
Detroit, Michigan 48226
Phone: (313) 224-4946 Fax: (313) 224-4336

Kimani Jeffrey
Anthony W. L. Johnson
Phillip Keller, Esq.
Edward King
Kelsey Maas
Jamie Murphy
Dolores Perales
Analine Powers, Ph.D.
W. Akilah Redmond
Rebecca Savage
Sabrina Shockley
Renee Short
Floyd Stanley
Thomas Stephens, Esq.
Timarie Szwed
Theresa Thomas
Janice Tillmon
Ian Tomashik
Emberly Vick
Ashley A. Wilson

TO: The Honorable Detroit City Council

FROM: David Whitaker, Director
Legislative Policy Division Staff 

DATE: 5/9/2025

RE: **RESOLUTION CALLING FOR URGENT IMPROVEMENTS TO PATIENT
SAFETY AT DETROIT MEDICAL CENTER HOSPITALS**

City Council Member Latisha Johnson has requested the Legislative Policy Division (LPD) to produce a resolution calling for urgent improvements to patient safety standards and procedures at Detroit Medical Center's Detroit Receiving Hospital, Sinai-Grace Hospital, and Harper University Hospital.

A Resolution by Council Member Latisha Johnson

RESOLUTION CALLING FOR URGENT IMPROVEMENTS TO PATIENT SAFETY AT DETROIT MEDICAL CENTER HOSPITALS

- WHEREAS** The Detroit Medical Center’s (DMC) Detroit Receiving Hospital, Sinai-Grace Hospital, and Harper University Hospital all received an “F” on their Spring 2025 Hospital Safety Grades according to The Leapfrog Group, a nonprofit watchdog organization that regularly analyzes hospital data from across the U.S. to determine how hospitals are performing in terms of patient safety;¹ and
- WHEREAS;** The 3 hospitals are the only hospitals in the state of Michigan out of the 81 graded by Leapfrog to receive an “F,” and they are all owned by the Texas-based, for-profit health conglomerate Tenet Healthcare Corp; and
- WHEREAS;** Tenet acquired DMC as part of the acquisition of Vanguard Health Systems in 2013, which made Tenet one of the largest investor-owned hospital companies in the U.S.; and
- WHEREAS;** All 3 of the hospitals that received a failing grade scored worse than average on metrics such as infections in the blood from a central line tube, infections and complications after surgery, handwashing, safe medication administration, communication practices both to patients and among staff, and harmful events such as patient falls, blood clots, and bed sores;² and
- WHEREAS;** Failing grades for patient safety at multiple local hospitals is cause for grave concern, as a Hospital Safety Grade of “F” is exceedingly rare, where only 0.49% of the 2,843 hospitals rated by Leapfrog in the Fall of 2024 received an “F”; and
- WHEREAS;** Medical errors have been recognized as a serious public health issue that has been reported as the third leading cause of death in the U.S. with estimates of over 200,000 deaths annually due to preventable medical errors;³ and
- WHEREAS;** DMC representatives have responded to the failing grades by attacking the credibility of the data that Leapfrog uses to calculate Hospital Safety Grades and suggesting that the organization punishes hospitals that do not pay them for consulting or participate in their surveys with lower grades;⁴ and
- WHEREAS;** According to Leapfrog’s scoring methodology, when hospitals decline to participate in the Leapfrog survey the grade report will state that the hospital “Declined to Report” the requested information, however this does not factor into the calculation of the Hospital Safety Grade;⁵ and

¹ <https://www.hospitalsafetygrade.org/h/dmc-harper-university-hospital>; <https://www.hospitalsafetygrade.org/h/dmc-sinai-grace-hospital>; <https://www.hospitalsafetygrade.org/h/dmc-detroit-receiving-hospital>

² *Id.*

³ Sameera V, Bindra A, Rath GP. Human errors and their prevention in healthcare. J Anaesthesiol Clin Pharmacol. 2021 Jul-Sep;37(3):328-335; Ahsani-Estahbanati E, Sergeevich Gordeev V, Doshmangir L. Interventions to reduce the incidence of medical error and its financial burden in health care systems: A systematic review of systematic reviews. Front Med (Lausanne). 2022.

⁴ <https://www.crainsdetroit.com/health-care/3-dmc-hospitals-rated-f-leapfrog-group>

⁵ https://www.hospitalsafetygrade.org/media/file/HospitalSafetyGrade_ScoringMethodology_Spring2019_FINAL.pdf

- WHEREAS;** If a hospital does not participate in the Leapfrog hospital survey, Leapfrog will gather data from publicly available sources such as the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), and hospitals who believe that the data is inaccurate have an opportunity to request corrections during the 3-week Safety Grade Review Period;⁶ and
- WHEREAS;** Although it is inevitable that any hospital will make mistakes, those mistakes can be fatal and therefore it is incumbent upon DMC to make every possible effort to discover the source of these mistakes and take immediate action to implement corrective measures; and
- WHEREAS;** It is essential that DMC hospitals provide high-quality care, as patients who need Emergency Medical Services are typically directed to DMC facilities and often do not have the ability or opportunity to choose where they receive care; and
- WHEREAS;** Detroit residents and others who receive care from DMC deserve to receive high-quality and compassionate care, and failing grades in patient safety are not acceptable particularly where Tenet reported profits of \$3.2 billion in 2024;⁷ **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT,**
- RESOLVED;** That the Detroit City Council strongly urges DMC to take immediate action to improve patient safety standards and practices at Detroit Receiving Hospital, Sinai-Grace Hospital, and Harper University Hospital; **NOW BE IT FINALLY**
- RESOLVED;** That the Detroit City Clerk provide a copy of this resolution to the Mayor, the Detroit Health Department, and the Executive Management Team for DMC Hospitals.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ <https://investor.tenethealth.com/press-releases/press-release-details/2025/Tenet-Reports-Strong-Fourth-Quarter-and-FY-2024-Results-Provides-2025-Financial-Outlook/default.aspx#:~:text=Net%20income%20available%20to%20the%20Company's%20common%20shareholders%20in%202024,associated%20with%20the%20hospital%20divestitures.>