

Saint Michael's Medical Center fights for its future in Newark

Saint Michael's Medical Center in Newark was founded by the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor nearly 150 years ago. In February 2013, Saint Michael's signed an Asset Purchase Agreement with Prime Healthcare in an effort to sustain its ministry. More than two years later, the hospital is still awaiting state approval, so it can continue to provide high-quality health care to the residents of the greater Newark area.

However, a state-commissioned report released in March recommends converting Saint Michael's Medical Center into an ambulatory center. If implemented, this recommendation would ultimately lead to closure for the hospital. Saint Michael's President and Chief Executive Officer David A. Ricci, recently spoke to NJ Advance Media about why the sale of the hospital to Prime Healthcare is crucial to keeping Saint Michael's open as an acute-care hospital.

Q: Why did Saint Michael's elect to seek a new buyer for the hospital?

A: In recent years, the medical center has struggled to meet the financial challenges of today's rapidly changing health care landscape and in 2012, set out to find a solution to sustain

the medical center's mission and help it flourish both financially and clinically.

Q: Why is Saint Michael's Medical Center vital to the Newark community?

A: Saint Michael's provides local residents a unique combination of tertiary services and leading-edge technology with the compassion and personal care of a community hospital. Saint Michael's also serves as a teaching hospital with more than 80 residents and fellows.

Thousands of local residents choose Saint Michael's for medical services each year. Now, that choice is at risk.

Saint Michael's is committed to its mission of providing high-quality health care to local residents, especially the most vulnerable — the poor, the elderly, and the sick. These are the individuals who need a local hospital the most.

Over the years, Essex County — and, in particular, Newark — has seen many hospitals shut their doors. If Saint Michael's closes, it will further restrict access to high-quality care and eliminate health care choice in New Jersey's largest city. Newark cannot afford to close another hospital.

Q: Why is Prime the best solution to sustain Saint Michael's?

A: Prime was selected as best positioned to secure a vibrant future for Saint Michael's. They have an enviable record of turning around struggling hospitals and have never sold or closed a hospital they have acquired.

In the past 12 years, Prime has saved more than 30 financially distressed hospitals, including here in New Jersey. They recently acquired St. Mary's Hospital in Passaic and are in the final stages of acquiring two Saint Clare's hospitals in Dover and Denville.

They also are committed to Saint Michael's mission and history of serving the Newark community and have agreed to provide all of the current inpatient and outpatient services we offer. They will continue to provide charity care consistent with our current policies and levels; honor the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care; and invest significant capital to continue to modernize our facilities and support strategic needs in technology, equipment and services. Prime also has agreed to retain substantially all 1,400 employees when the sale is finalized.

Q: How can supporters help Saint Michael's?

A: We are so thankful for the overwhelming amount of support we have received from many local groups and residents. To help keep Saint Michael's open as an acute-care hospital, visit savesmmc.com, or call 1-844-KEEP-SMMC.

Learn more at smmcnj.org.

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