

November 22, 2021

Jim Coleman, Chair  
And the Board of Trustees  
Erlanger Health System  
975 East Third St.  
Chattanooga, TN 37404

Dear Mr. Coleman and Trustees:

The relationship between a hospital's organized medical staff and its Board of Trustees is critical for high quality patient care. This relationship has become the topic of enormous concern and conversation between physicians throughout the community, not just those affiliated with Erlanger, after the Erlanger Health System Board of Trustees removed the elected Medical Chief of Staff.

The Chattanooga-Hamilton County Medical Society represents more than 1,000 area physicians in various practice settings and with different hospital affiliations. Our Board of Directors includes a diverse group of physicians who are profoundly concerned about the perceived loss of autonomy of employed and independent medical staffs, compelling us to document our concerns. This situation is heightened because the physician in question is without a doubt one of the most widely respected physician leaders in the state and has voluntarily devoted his time and much of his career to the Erlanger Health System.

It is our understanding that the Board of Trustees cannot "fire" another trustee, but must instead refer action to the appointing authority for any individual trustee. While the Board of Trustees may have the legal authority for the action that was taken, it is extremely disappointing that concerns were not brought to the attention of the Chief of Staff's appointing authority: Erlanger's organized medical staff.

The leadership of the organized medical staff is self-governing, possessing special expertise and knowledge, and willingly accepting professional authority to regulate the professional practice and standards of the entire medical staff. The responsibilities are weighty and those who willingly accept this role are unique and special leaders. The action taken by the Board of Trustees has the potential to create fear and distrust among the very physicians who are most critical to the success of every hospital and may lessen the physician voice in concerning ways.

The Medical Society has had a long-standing relationship with the Erlanger Health System. Our organization played a significant role in the establishment of the Hospital Authority and for some 40 years the Society nominated outstanding physicians to serve on the Board of Trustees.

Many Erlanger physicians are members in good standing and several Erlanger physicians serve on our Board of Directors. The health of Erlanger is not only critical the health of our community, but also for the stability of the entire regional healthcare workforce.

As the Erlanger Board of Trustees determines its next steps to chart the future for this community treasure, we urge you to restore and respect the critical role, authority, and autonomy of the organized medical staff.

Sincerely,

**2021 Medical Society Board of Directors**

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cc: William Jackson, MD  
Benjamin Dart, MD  
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