

December 19, 2023

Dear Task Force Members:

It's been our privilege to serve with you as part of the Governor's Task Force on Academic Health at the University of Minnesota, well-chaired by Commissioner Jan Malcolm.

We generally support many of the recommendations now being considered by the Task Force.

However, we're concerned they don't sufficiently address some of the key issues affecting the University's Medical School. The quality of that school largely determines the quality of academic medicine in Minnesota and it greatly impacts the future quality of health care throughout our state.

Top quality, readily accessible, and affordable health care is the Number One Asset we offer our citizens. Since the U's Medical School teaches and trains over 70 percent of the state's doctors, it directly affects that quality. We cannot afford mediocrity.

Thanks to the dedication of Dean Tolar and the doctors, nurses, and other U health care staff, the Medical School's national standing has improved in recent years. However, if we want to provide Minnesotans with the best medical care, we should strive to have the country's best public medical school at our University. This challenge must be addressed immediately and urgently. Actions needed include:

#1. The University and Fairview appear unlikely to reach agreement regarding their future relationship by the original December 31, 2023 deadline. If so, the Governor should appoint a Mediator, who can help resolve their differences. A timely and successful mediation would allow the University to provide a better future roadmap to the Legislature before it reconvenes on February 12, 2024.

#2. The President of the University must tell the Governor and Legislature whether significant additional funding for the Medical School is among its highest priorities for the upcoming Session. If the University is not prepared to make such a statement, then pursuing #3 would be ill-advised.

#3. The Medical School needs to make a specific request (not a range) to the Legislature, which details the amount of money requested, its purposes, and how it will advance academic quality. All of us need to be told what the Medical School wants to specifically do to further improve its academic training, its patient care, and its research capabilities. At present, despite Senior Vice President Frans' most recent letter, that clarity is still lacking.

#4. The University and Fairview must begin immediately to address the growing deficiencies in its existing hospitals. President Ettinger recently described those deficiencies to the Task Force. A first-rate educational program and outstanding patient care cannot be housed in second- or third-rate facilities.

Mayo Clinic just announced an intended \$5 billion investment in its Rochester Campus to maintain its world primacy. That \$5 billion commitment establishes a marker for the level of capital investment needed to become or remain premier.

Therefore, the University should develop the wherewithal to issue \$1 billion in tax exempt bonds, backed by the University's Foundation, private philanthropy, and the State. That capital fund should grow in subsequent years to finance the building of a new hospital and other improvements.

The University's Medical School and medical center are absolutely critical to the quality and availability of health care in our state. Ensuring Minnesota has a nation-leading medical school at its flagship

University and providing the best possible care to Minnesotans are expensive propositions. What would be even more costly, however, is not achieving those goals.

The health of our state is dependent upon the health of our citizens. The future of Minnesota is at stake.

Sincerely,

Mark Dayton

Tim Pawlenty

Vance Opperman

cc: Governor Tim Walz
President Jeffrey Ettinger
Senior Vice President Myron Frans
Ms. Kathy Tunheim