

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cedar Crest Hospital Must Commit to No Medical Deportation for S.C.

Community Members Gathered to Support Family of Dominican Mother in a Coma Who LVHN is Threatening to Deport

Allentown - Today at 10am, a group of community members and nonprofit organizations mobilized to the Lehigh Valley Health Network - Cedar Crest Hospital to demand that the hospital administration commits in writing to remove the threat of deportation for patient S.C. Last week the community group mobilized after the hospital gave her family 48 hrs to find another care facility or agree to deport her to the Dominican Republic. The hospital then gave the family a 7-day period before they would consider deportation again; that deadline was today.

A delegation of five advocates that included representatives from Free Migration Project, the Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition, Make the Road Pennsylvania, and Allentown City Council Member Ce-ce Gerlach, attempted to hand-deliver a letter to hospital administration after the mobilization, addressed to Cedar Crest Hospital President Stephen Zieniewicz and Lehigh Valley Health Network President Brian Nester. Instead, Administrator of Public Safety & Emergency Operations Ryan Hay intervened and committed to delivering the letter on behalf of the advocates, citing that no one from the administration was available to speak with the advocates. The letter outlines what the coalition is asking of the hospital administration at this time, and reiterates the coalition's commitment to supporting this family. At this time, the family and advocates are asking of the hospital administration to:

1. Commit in writing to remove the threat of deportation for S.C.,
2. Continue to provide health care until she can be safely transferred to a long-term care facility, and
3. Work with the family, advocates and attorneys, who have already begun the process to identify an appropriate care facility for S.C.

“I have searched for resources in the community that have been helping me find a solution for my family. There are community groups and lawyers working on my wife's case, which is really the responsibility of the hospital. I have knocked on doors and have raised my voice because I want to protect my wife's life. My wife, S.C., is still in a very delicate health condition, my children and I fear for her life if she is deported to the Dominican Republic. My family and I are asking the hospital to remove the threat of deportation as an option for my wife. I am doing everything I can to save my wife. I ask that the hospital do the same.”, said **Junior Rivas, husband of patient S.C.**

Patient S.C. is a Dominican mother of two and wife who has been in a coma at Lehigh Valley Health Network - Cedar Crest Hospital after suffering complications from an aneurysm surgery in late December 2022. She is bedridden and requires a high level of care in order to recover and survive.

“What the hospital administration is doing to S.C. and her family is inhumane and unjust. How they choose to treat their most vulnerable patients says a lot about their priorities for all their patients”, **said Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition Organizing Director Katia Pérez.**

Medical deportation is a practice used by hospitals to deport immigrants in the U.S. without informed consent or through coerced consent of the patient’s family. Hospitals charter private flights to transport undocumented patients to their country of origin to avoid having to pay for long-term medical care. Forced deportation of these patients typically results in death or aggravation of their illness or injury.

“Cedar Crest Hospital is a non-profit organization, whose mission states they ‘heal, comfort and care for the people of our community’. However, threatening to deport a member of our community at a time of a health crisis is wholly incompatible with ‘healing, comfort and care’. As a long-time Allentown resident I am appalled that the administration would put this family through this situation, and I hope they course-correct promptly”, **said Make the Road Pennsylvania Senior Lead Organizer Armando Jiménez.**

“Medical deportation is a shameful practice for any place that is committed to healing. Putting cost-saving measures and profits before a person’s health is abhorrent. Immigrant members of our community should not have to fear deportation when they’re looking for healthcare, and hospitals should not be in the business of deporting people. We will support S.C.’s family and continue to object to medical deportation as an option for any patients in need of care.”, **said Free Migration Project Deputy Director Adrianna Torres-García**

The [practice of private deportations by hospitals](#) is unregulated, with little transparency or accountability. Little data exists about this practice. Medical deportations can occur even if the patient is not in a condition to travel safely or receive adequate care in the country of origin. Moreover, medical deportations separate patients in critical conditions from their support and family networks. **The Lehigh Valley Health Network hospitals, including Cedar Crest Hospital, must commit to rejecting the practice of medical deportation and provide patient S.C. with the care she needs until appropriate care is identified by the hospital, family and advocates.**

Hotline: You can always access the End Medical Deportation Hotline to learn more and report a medical deportation at 614-721-4829

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