

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 4, 2018

The Honorable Seema Verma, Administrator
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
7500 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, Maryland 21244

Dear Administrator Verma:

Since its founding in 1926, All Children's Hospital in St. Petersburg, Florida has been guided by a simple phrase: "There is only one child in all the world, and that child's name is All Children." As the Tampa region grew in the second half of the 20th century, so did All Children's, gaining national prominence and becoming a place where, when children required emergency care and treatment, their parents knew they would be in good hands.

Given this legacy, we are deeply troubled by the allegations of abuse and neglect within All Children's Heart Institute's surgical unit, contained in the recent *Tampa Bay Times* article "Heartbroken." Examples of allegations include:

- Hospital staff and administrators were aware of high instances of complications and deaths in the Heart Institute's surgical unit over multiple years and did not take adequate steps to address it;
- Employees voiced concerns to administrators and were ignored or forced out;
- Physicians provided inaccurate medical advice to parents and misinformed parents of treatment options;
- Physicians with high rates of complications and patient deaths, including from relatively routine procedures, were kept on surgical rotations;
- Concerns from parents over post-surgical complications – including ruptured sutures, infections, instances of gross negligence, and "never events" – were ignored or denied by physicians and staff, resulting in permanent disabilities and deaths;
- Many parents were unaware of the issues plaguing the Heart Institute, despite what appears to be wide spread knowledge of these issues in the medical community, indicating a lack of transparency, oversight, and/or publicly available information on outcomes;
- The Florida Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) cited All Children's for not reporting two serious medical errors in May, 2018;
- The Heart Institute continued to conduct surgical procedures until October, 2018.

We understand that the AHCA notified the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) in May, 2018 that the Heart Institute failed to report two serious medical errors. Given the seriousness of these allegations on the well-being of patients and CMS' notification by AHCA, we write to inquire the following:

- Is CMS currently investigating All Children's Hospital, or has the possibility of an investigation or quality survey been discussed between CMS and AHCA?
- If so, please provide an update, including whether the investigation is limited to the two instances of failed reporting or more broadly includes an investigation of the Heart Institute's reported failings, lack of oversight, and lack of transparency outlined by the *Tampa Bay Times*;
- If not, please explain why, and if the decision was made following discussions with and recommendations from AHCA.

We are particularly disappointed that inadequate regulatory oversight appears to have contributed to prolonging the pain and suffering for patients and their loved ones at All Children's Hospital. The families who have lost their children, the families whose children are still suffering, and the community that stands with them expects accountability and corrective action – with the goal of restoring the hospital to the gold standard reputation it held for many decades. We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Charlie Crist
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Kathy Castor
MEMBER OF CONGRESS