

Dear Board of Trustees,

The nurses of Houlton Regional Hospital have **NO CONFIDENCE** in CEO Jeff Zewe for the following reasons:

Failure to Provide Continuity of Care

- The Hospital has announced that long-time Emergency Department physicians and the physicians who care for hospitalized patients are being replaced. The Hospital now also relies on virtual physicians overnight for admitted patients. These changes remove respected physicians who know our community and our patients.
- The Hospital has promised expanded services, yet physicians and surgeons continue to leave almost as quickly as they are recruited. Cardiology, orthopedic and hospitalist providers and a general surgeon have all come and gone, disrupting continuity of care and raising serious concerns about the Hospital's ability to retain the providers our community deserves.

Failure to Retain Staff and Local Expertise

- While the Hospital has struggled with ongoing nursing turnover and relies heavily on traveling nurses, it has also lost its Chief Nursing Officer, Acute Care Manager, and OR Manager within the last year. All were long-time nurses of our Hospital and trusted members of our community.

Diminishing Security Capacity

- The highly respected Director of Security has left, and security staffing has been reduced after years of efforts to achieve appropriate staffing levels to meet the needs of patients and staff.

Failure to Staff Appropriately

- The Hospital continues to overflow the Acute Care Unit and is not consistently following its own policies regarding higher staffing levels for the sickest patients. Many of these patients would be cared for in an Intensive Care Unit at other hospitals, where one nurse typically cares for only two patients because of the severity of their illnesses. At Houlton Regional Hospital, those same patients are often included in full assignments of five patients, reducing the level of care each patient can receive.
- The Hospital staffs only two nurses in the Emergency Department from 11:00 p.m. to 9:00 a.m., leaving the department inadequately staffed and limiting its ability to provide timely care when critical patients, including laboring mothers, require the attention of all available staff.

Failure to Reach a Fair Contract

- The Hospital has failed to reach a fair settlement with the nurses. It continues to insist on removing staffing language from the contract – the very language that has protected patients and nurses and contributed to the positive patient outcomes the Hospital frequently cites.

Reliance on Outside Consultants

- The Hospital increasingly relies on out-of-state consultants from Mississippi, Texas, and elsewhere, placing greater value on their recommendations than on the knowledge and experience of local staff when making decisions that impact our patients and our Hospital.

Creating an Unhealthy Culture

- The Hospital has fostered an unhealthy culture characterized by a corporate mentality and a top-down approach that devalues local staff and erodes the community-focused, nonprofit spirit of our Hospital. Patients want to remain in Houlton and receive care close to family and friends, whose support is vital to recovery. The Hospital is rapidly moving away from the community-centered environment that makes Houlton special.

Jeff Zewe has been CEO for just over a year and has already caused significant damage to our Hospital and community. One of the hospitals where Mr. Zewe previously served as CEO, located in Bradford, Pennsylvania, has since closed following major changes that began during his tenure. We must take action while there is still time to preserve and protect our community hospital.

For all of these reasons, we, the undersigned, have **NO CONFIDENCE** in Jeff Zewe's continued employment as CEO of Houlton Regional Hospital. We respectfully call upon the Board of Trustees to terminate his employment immediately.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned Nurses of Houlton Regional Hospital