

Submitter: kathleen kelly
On Behalf Of: patients
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure: HB4130

I am a retired emergency physician in northern Virginia and now free to speak against corporations influencing the doctor patient relationship. I speak for others still fearful of job loss and tied by Non compete clauses in their contracts. Private Equity has been the worst thing to ever happen to healthcare. Their goals to investors and mine to my patients are in direct opposition. The argument that they are making things efficient is not true. They simply reduce services to patients and limit access to the most qualified people to care for you. Making money is their goal with plans to flip the companies they purchase in 3-5 years leaving emergency departments gutted as well as hospitals when they take ownership of those. One company currently has a monopoly on the ERs surrounding our nation's Capitol but no one seems to have noticed. This company is backed by a private equity firm which also backs a firm in Texas and that firm, US Anesthesia Partners, is being sued by the FTC for monopolizing care and raising and fixing prices.

Prior to retiring I'd seen the number of doctors reduced per shift, at times staffing with one doctor for the entire ER. If I had two patients needing my resuscitation efforts it was impossible to devote life saving efforts to both, at least well. Private Equity has taken over another ER where I helped found the premier pediatric ER in the area. After 30 days they have already dropped one 10 hour shift of pediatric ER coverage per day with an announcement of more by summer. They are also replacing subspecialty trained Pediatric Emergency Medicine specialists with general pediatricians who will command a lower salary but are not trained in pediatric emergency medicine, a different field requiring 3 more years of fellowship training. Emergency Medicine has the most experience with the business of corporations/private equity in healthcare as it began with us. Initially it was our own doctors that formed corporations and offered buy ins to partnership tracks. They did not try to tell us how to practice. In the last 10 years we have seen these new models of businesses buying us. Suddenly delivery of care was affected. We were encouraged to spend limited time per patient and bill them at the highest possible code with coders sending charts back if they thought a few more pennies might be made. Quality of care went down and we daily spoke to each other about how dangerous the job had become. That we could not split ourselves in 2 as seemed to be necessary to stay on top of our sickest patients. Anyone who could leave began to get out. After getting into emergency departments these massive companies began to expand to other areas of healthcare. After ERs these companies have found a place in anesthesia, hospitalist medicine, radiology, etc. Now we see United Healthcare employing 10% of U.S. physicians. Amazon has jumped on. Insurance reimbursements have dropped and practice costs have risen causing clinics, hospitals and independent practitioners to be forced to sell out to survive. Healthcare

is in crisis at this point, especially areas that serve the poorest populations. I personally believe there must be a national solution but until that happens we must strengthen our individual state Corporate Practice of Medicine laws so they can do what they were intended to do. Protect patients from conflicts of interest. I urge you to support this bill. The amount of interest (pressure) you are likely seeing from Amazon, United Healthcare, and others tells you that they want those healthcare dollars. Believe me, it is not to provide better healthcare.