

Why the District Needs This Hospital

In 2003, when the District presented statistics on the critical need for emergency and primary health care in Wards 5, 6 and 7, members of the D.C. Council unanimously pledged to renovate the city's health care system, and they approved the concept of a National Capital Medical Center (NCMC). At that time Howard University was the only medical institution to join with the District to help resolve the need for emergency, primary and specialty care, and, most important, for health care that is accessible to everyone in the District.

Since 2003 the District and Howard have done studies to define how the NCMC would function. With the help of outside experts, we have developed a model for an integrated care facility.

It is unacceptable that 140,000 people in Washington -- or 42 percent of the city's population -- have inadequate access to health care, especially emergency care.

All the District's trauma centers are clustered in Northwest within a mile of one another, leaving some areas of the city, particularly Southeast, without emergency services. Based on this lack of emergency room capacity, the demand for health care services in general, population growth and standard hospitalization rates, we must increase hospital and emergency room capacity in the District.

The National Capital Medical Center will provide emergency and primary care and will meet the medical and surgical needs of residents in surrounding neighborhoods. While improving the District's overall health care infrastructure, the center also will serve as a hub for community health care initiatives in Southeast.



The National Capital Medical Center will:

- Improve access to emergency and trauma care for residents in the Northeast and Southeast.
- Alleviate pressure on the District's overloaded emergency medical system.
- Address problems with access to specialty care through a medical building, where consultation for serious conditions will be provided.
- Provide a referral point for diagnostic testing that requires major medical equipment.
- Provide preventive care to improve overall health outcomes and diminish health care costs.

The District and Howard University already have worked together on community development in LeDroit Park in a public-private partnership that has become a national model. Howard also is the only university in the area to establish a public charter school for D.C. students -- the Howard University Middle School of Mathematics and Science. Howard University is a robust financial partner for the District, bringing to the table an A2 rating from Moody's Investor Service. That puts it in an excellent position to attract the financing necessary to cover its 50 percent share of NCMC building costs. Now the power to make the NCMC a reality is in the hands of the D.C. Council.

By acting to approve this partnership between the District and Howard University without costly delays, the council members will serve not only the well-being of the District but the well-being of their constituents.

Anthony A. Williams

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H. Patrick Swygert

are respectively, the mayor of the District and the president of Howard University.

Anthony.Williams@dc.gov; President@Howard.edu