



A Rhode Islander's Guide to Understanding the Lifespan/Care New England Merger



The Protect Our Healthcare Coalition is a group of leading Rhode Island non-profits and consumer groups with a goal to protect and promote quality, affordable healthcare for all.

www.protecthealthri.org



What's it about and why should I care?

Lifespan and Care New England combined would make up 80% of Rhode Island's healthcare system.

More than just hospitals, the two systems have a significant presence in laboratory testing, primary and behavioral healthcare practices, ambulatory sites, home care services, and specialty clinics such as cardio-vascular centers and cancer clinics. The partnership of Brown's Warren Alpert School of Medicine adds expanded teaching and research into the mix.

A healthcare merger of this scale has the potential to impact every Rhode Islander. Whether it's your annual exam with your family physician, an urgent care visit, or a hospitalization, the merger will have an effect on the quality and cost of your experience. The new merged entity would also become the state's single

largest employer and would have significant power over what services are available, and how and where people can access them.

The impact of the merger on our healthcare delivery system, the new entity's responsibility to provide culturally appropriate quality care, and how it will contribute to improved public health and to the economic wellbeing of our community, must all be considered.

It's about YOUR healthcare...

ACCESS

EQUITY

QUALITY

COST

What makes up the current Lifespan and Care New England systems?

Lifespan

Rhode Island Hospital

Miriam Hospital

Newport Hospital

Bradley Hospital

Gateway Healthcare (Mental health and substance use outpatient, residential, and community-based programming)

Coastal Medical (primary care)

Lifespan Laboratories, Clinics, Research Units, and Physician's Groups

Care New England

Kent Hospital

Women & Infants Hospital

Butler Hospital

Providence Center (Mental health and addiction treatment programming)

Integra Community Care (primary care)

VNA of Care New England (Home health and hospice)

CNE Laboratories, Clinics, a Wellness Center, and Physician's Groups

+ What's the merger approval process and timeline?



The Federal Trade Commission, the RI Department of Health, the state's Attorney General or potentially the RI Legislature will determine if the merger should occur.

The **Federal Trade Commission (FTC)** will [analyze the merger](#) to determine whether the potential benefits outweigh the potential harms to competition. This is because, when individual healthcare systems merge into larger systems, they gain a larger share of the consumer health market. That puts them in a position to demand health insurance companies to pay more for medical care and procedures. These higher prices are not carried by the insurers, but by all of us in the form of higher premiums and by our taxes for state and federal Medicaid and Medicare spending.

Lifespan and Care New England submitted their application to the FTC on April 14, 2021.

The FTC has 30 days to complete a preliminary review. If the initial review has raised competition (anti-trust) issues, the FTC may ask for more information so it can take a closer look. When the information is received, they have another 30 days for review. The FTC will then either approve or challenge the merger based on their review. The RI Legislature may also pass a law that could override

the FTC, allowing the merger to progress.

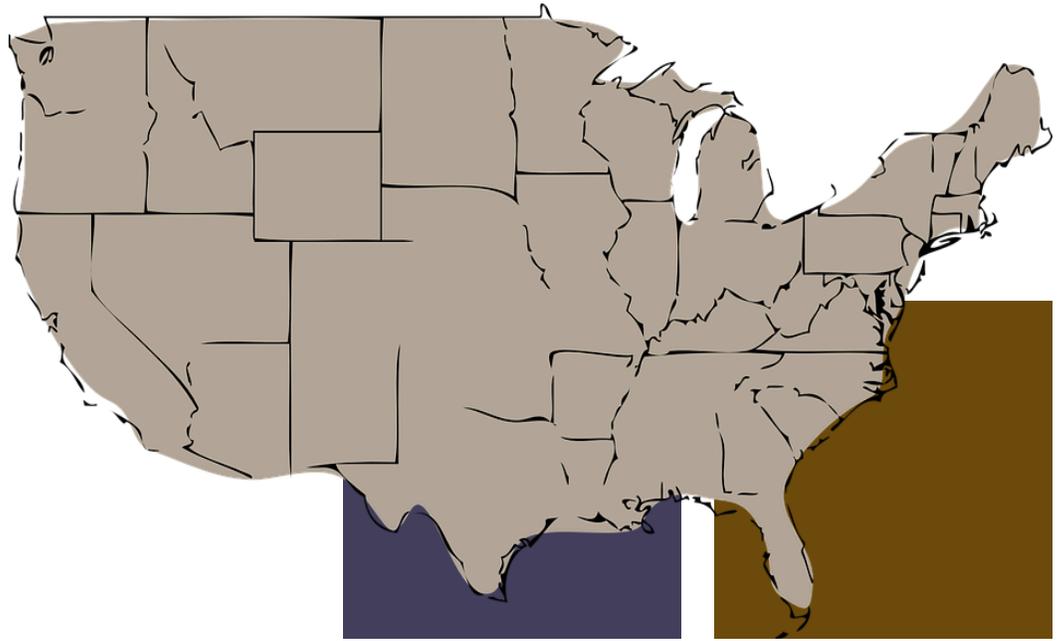
The **Rhode Department of Health (RIDOH)** and the **Office of Attorney General (AG)** are also required to determine if the merger should be allowed under our state's Hospital Conversion Act and anti-trust law, and if so, what the terms and conditions of an approved merger should include.

Lifespan and Care New England submitted their application to our state regulators on April 26, 2021.

There are [several steps in the timeline](#) for this state-level review. But, it does not begin until both RIDOH and the AG deem the application complete, which can take some time.

What is most important is that this review, once initiated, **is required to include the opportunity for public input.**

We all have a chance to weigh in on whether the merger should be allowed, and if so, what the terms and conditions for it should be.



What's happened in other states?

All across America, hospitals are merging. Studies have shown that hospital mergers and healthcare provider consolidation most often lead to higher health costs and unsatisfactory patient experiences without quality improvements.

Hospital administrators who create the mergers say the consolidation will improve efficiency, access to care, and quality of care. But, in a January 2020 study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, researchers found “no evidence of quality improvement” along with “modestly worse patient experiences and no significant changes in readmission or mortality rates” following hospital consolidation.

Another study analyzing highly concentrated hospital markets in California found that an increase in the share of physicians in practices

owned by a hospital was associated with a 12% increase in premiums for private plans sold in the state's Marketplace.

To avoid what has happened in other states, there must be robust community input and close scrutiny of the proposed merger--including the promises being made. Appropriate requirements must be placed on the merged system to promote quality, access, public health, and include a funded and staffed regulatory oversight body to hold the new entity accountable to all of us.

Considerations for community input

The proposed Lifespan/Care New England merger presents Rhode Islanders with the chance to speak out about their expectations for a system that is accountable and responsive to the people of our state.



We must ask:

- How do we avoid the pitfalls experienced in other states by demanding the merged system meaningfully addresses quality and cost?
- How do we ensure the system is responsive to issues of access, population health, and health equity?
- How do we ensure the system – and the hospitals within it – adequately benefit the community, including contributing to addressing the conditions we live in that affect a wide range of health and quality-of-life risks and outcomes? These conditions, such as safe housing, food security, clean air and water, and other [social and economic factors](#) are estimated to make up 40% of good health that impacts disease and life expectancy.
- How do we ensure the system provides the necessary range of services based on population health indicators, and that these services are accessible, culturally and linguistically appropriate, and patient-centered?
- How do we guarantee fair employment practices within the system, including promotion of diversity in hiring, fair wages, and opportunities for career advancement?
- How should the governing board of directors of the merged entity, and the advisory boards of the hospitals themselves, be structured in order to include community members that represent the diverse people, neighborhoods, and backgrounds of Rhode Island's population?
- How to create the state oversight structure(s) necessary to limit the merged entity's ability to exercise monopoly-pricing power and to hold it accountable to promises made on quality, access, and equity?

How do I get involved ?

Visit the [Protect Our Healthcare Coalition](#) website to stay informed. Bookmark the page and check in regularly for updates and information.

Write a letter TODAY to Rhode Island Department of Health Director [Dr. Nicole Alexander-Scott](#) and to [Attorney General Peter Neronha](#) with your thoughts and concerns about the merger. And, consider submitting it to your local news outlet as a letter to the editor.



Some questions Rhode Islanders are already asking...

Will making appointments become more difficult or will it take much longer to get an appointment?

Will my info be shared without my consent?

Will there be more aggressive recruiting for medical studies?

How will the relationships between health insurers and the healthcare system change?

What happens to those providers that are not part of Lifespan and Care New England?

Protect Our Healthcare Coalition partners include: Economic Progress Institute, Mental Health Association RI, RI NOW, RI Parent Information Network, RI Health Center Association, NAACP Providence Branch, United Way of Rhode Island, Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, SEIU Rhode Island Council, Foster Forward, RI Coalition for the Homeless, Rhode Island Working Families Party, Mental Health Recovery Coalition, Oasis Wellness Center, RI Community Food Bank, Substance Use & Mental Health Leadership Council, Rhode Island Coalition for Children and Families, HousingWorks RI, Rhode Island Organizing Project (RIOP), Thundermist Health Center

For more information visit www.protecthealthri.org or email us at ProtectRIHealth@gmail.com