

To the editor:

I am one of the 300+ signers of the petition expressing concern about possible restrictions being placed on our island health care because PeaceHealth is a Catholic institution. I have attended meetings, read a lot, and listened a lot.

Despite the obvious fact that the future is uncertain (isn't it always?), I am now totally convinced that PeaceHealth has our community's interests at heart, and that their delivery of health care here will meet our needs, including the protection of women's reproductive rights, the honoring of advanced directives, and our rights under state law to death with dignity.

Let's get real here: the services that will be provided in our new hospital/medical center are a significant improvement over what we have now, and this is only because of the partnership -- and extraordinary financial commitment -- of PeaceHealth. Certainly, I would have been happier had our new hospital been willing to offer elective abortions. But our current medical clinic doesn't provide elective abortions either, so we aren't losing a service that we once had. Our new hospital isn't going to offer neurosurgery either, or deliver babies.

Physicians at the new facility will in fact provide standard referrals for procedures that aren't offered here, including elective abortions and physician-assisted suicide. All health care decisions will be driven only by the needs and wishes of the patient, in consultation with his/her physician.

Of course there are no guarantees that things won't change over time. But PeaceHealth has already demonstrated its commitment to our island and the medical needs of the community here, and has made no attempt whatsoever to impose Catholic doctrine on us. I am confident that the islanders who negotiated the 50-year contract did so in good faith, and would never have agreed to a contract that would sell us short in the services we have come to value and expect.

I recently had an opportunity to take a tour of our new facility, and there is only one word that describes it adequately: WOW!!! Just wait until you see it and experience it. I know you will be

proud that our little island has such a quality, incredibly beautiful, state-of-the-art facility that has been meticulously designed just for us.

Lori Stokes