

MSDC Statement on Healthcare “East of the River”

Dated December 18, 2018

As our city debates what physical healthcare facilities it needs in Wards 7 and 8, two things are abundantly clear to the Medical Society of the District of Columbia. First, adequate access to quality health care “east of the river” is lacking due to a number of factors. Second, there is a wealth of resources across this city that can help solve some of those factors, but the resources are not limited to just one facility or one ward. The Medical Society enters this debate because our strategic vision is to make the District of Columbia “the best place to practice medicine,” and we are dedicated to helping the District provide world-class healthcare regardless of where patients are from or where in the city they choose to receive care.

Currently, the District is home to top-ranked, world-renowned healthcare facilities and medical schools, many of which reflect our city’s wonderfully diverse population. We are fortunate to have two distinguished academic centers of medicine eager to build on the care already available in Wards 7 and 8. These include Howard University College of Medicine, which ranks among the nation’s highest producers of black medical professionals, and The George Washington University School of Medicine & Health Sciences, which can trace its history back to the first school of medicine in the nation’s capital.

We urge the Council and the Bowser Administration to take an open approach to deciding what care facilities are necessary in Wards 7 and 8, and to engage in a collaborative discussion over the next 90 days that comes to an agreement to provide continuous, appropriate, and comprehensive health services in the neighborhoods of our under-served populations. These decisions must not further disadvantage health care facilities or schools that are already struggling to deal with current health inequities, and they must not reduce the healthcare choices available to our residents. What is clear is that the decisions must balance the financial realities of providing quality care for our residents with the need for a vibrant network of providers, academic centers and hospitals.