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**UAMS Faces Obstacles in its Efforts
to Save Proton Center of Arkansas**

LITTLE ROCK — While the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) is working to save the Proton Center of Arkansas (PIA) from closure, numerous obstacles continue to imperil the operation, said UAMS Chancellor C. Lowry Barnes, M.D.

“As a minority partner, UAMS is limited in the steps we can take to save the Proton Center of Arkansas,” Barnes said. “We are trying because we want to keep proton therapy as a treatment option for Arkansans. We will continue to try until we have exhausted all of our options.”

PIA opened in September 2023 as a partnership between Proton International, UAMS, Baptist Health, and Arkansas Children’s. Proton International is the managing partner of PIA, holding 55% of the shares. UAMS is a minority member (20%), along with Baptist Health (15%) and Arkansas Children’s (10%).

While PIA is housed on the UAMS campus, Proton International is responsible for the day-to-day management of the operation — an obligation that it announced on July 21 it would cease after July 31. UAMS has committed to managing the facility through Aug. 31 so that existing proton patients can complete their treatments with no disruption to care.

“We are partners in a deal whose financial structure was built on revenue assumption that never reflected the clinical realities,” Barnes said. “The joint venture borrowed \$23 million more than the cost of the equipment — paid for by a bond deal financed for 30 years.

“The proforma, which was prepared by an external firm, suggested a payment per treatment that was significantly more than what we are actually paid,” Barnes added. “It also was predicated on volumes that are not possible because of the pediatric and complicated patients we treat. Simply put, these patients take longer to treat, and we are committed to give them the best care possible, even at the expense of the bottom line.”

“For months, [UAMS has been voicing our concerns](#) as PIA falls further behind on its financial obligations under the agreement,” Barnes said, noting that UAMS is owed nearly \$4 million in rent and just over \$1 million in salary costs for PIA employees.

“Because the joint venture has fallen significantly behind on its contractual obligations to reimburse UAMS for physician and staffing costs, UAMS has exercised its contractual rights to stop providing these services,” Barnes said, adding that UAMS will no longer provide proton therapy services under those agreements after Aug. 31.

UAMS has been transparent with PIA employees about the situation, Barnes said, and is taking care of those who will be displaced.

UAMS continues its efforts to save the Proton Center of Arkansas.

“We have tried to work out a deal with the bondholders and have made very strong efforts to purchase the center and become the sole owners. Unfortunately, the bondholders have rejected our bid, despite the support from Baptist and Arkansas Children’s of our efforts,” Barnes said.

“UAMS remains at the table willing to work toward a resolution, but we also must face the financial reality of this difficult situation,” he said. “We will do anything we can do to continue to provide proton therapy to our state without putting our other missions at risk with severe financial losses.”

UAMS is the state’s only health sciences university, with colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Health Professions and Public Health; a graduate school; a hospital; a main campus in Little Rock; a Northwest Arkansas regional campus in Fayetteville; a statewide network of regional campuses; and seven institutes: the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute, Jackson T. Stephens Spine & Neurosciences Institute, Harvey & Bernice Jones Eye Institute, Psychiatric Research Institute, Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging, Translational Research Institute, and the Institute for Community Health Innovation. UAMS includes UAMS Health, a statewide health system that encompasses all of UAMS’ clinical enterprise. UAMS is the only adult Level 1 trauma center in the state. UAMS has 3,553 students and 1,030 medical residents and fellows, and two dental residents. It is the state’s largest public employer with about 12,000 employees, including 1,200 physicians who provide care to patients at UAMS, its regional campuses, Arkansas Children’s, the VA Medical Center and Baptist Health. Visit www.uams.edu or www.uamshealth.com. Find us on [Facebook](#), [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#).

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