



Bellevue Hospital Center
South Manhattan Healthcare Network

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Lynda D. Curtis, Executive Director
Senior Vice President

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Hon. Betsy Gotbaum
Office of the Public Advocate
1 Centre Street
New York, New York 10007

Dear Public Advocate Gotbaum:

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the temporary closure of the 4-bed birthing center at Bellevue Hospital Center. I share your interest in safeguarding the well being of our community and ensuring access to needed services, and I want to take this opportunity to thank you for all of your advocacy efforts on our behalf.

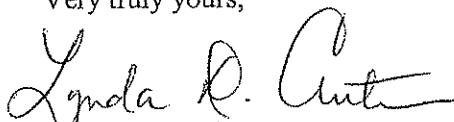
As you may know, until September 1st, 2009, Bellevue operated two maternal delivery units: a 4-bed birthing center, and a 12-bed labor and delivery unit. Both services were located adjacent to one another, and obstetricians and midwives worked in close collaboration to care for patients.

Over the past nine years, the volume of births at Bellevue has significantly dropped, from 2,164 per annum nine years ago to 1,888 last year. The low demand required us to streamline operations and close the smaller birthing center. In the current fiscal climate, and with low demand, it was very difficult to justify maintaining both units. Patients were notified of the change.

We are confident that we will be able to comfortably accommodate the current patient volume while continuing to provide the same high quality care that is our expectation in the larger labor and delivery unit. Midwives and obstetricians are working side by side in our labor and delivery unit -- a modern, state-of-the-art environment that offers a comfortable setting for new moms, direct access to the infant nursery, and close proximity to our renowned Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

In closing, I want to allay your concerns: there has been no diminution in access to safe, high quality midwifery and obstetrical services at Bellevue. We are very proud of our achievements in lowering our rate of C-sections, and are committed to continued improvement in this area in the future. Thank you again for sharing your concerns. If you have any remaining questions or concerns, please call me at 212-562-4132.

Very truly yours,


Lynda D. Curtis