

May 26 statement from Longview Regional Medical Center spokesperson Libby Bryson:

Longview Regional Medical Center plays an important role in the community, providing access to quality care services for approximately 270,000 patient service encounters through inpatient, emergency room, outpatient services and physician practice visits each year. We know each patient's healthcare needs and financial situation are different – and we have established processes to assist patients in understanding their personal financial responsibility and practices, such as charity care, discounts and flexible payment plans, to help as they pay their balances. Legal action always is the last avenue considered, and it is only considered after evaluating the patient's credit record and verifying their employment status.

Recent years have seen health insurance plans shift more of the payment for services to the covered individual through higher deductibles and copayments. Because of this, we work closely with patients to develop payment arrangements over a mutually agreed-upon timeframe. In some cases, patients who are capable of paying at least a portion of their bills choose not to pay and do not engage with us to resolve their account. As a last resort after numerous other attempts – upwards of 10 or more – to contact the patient to resolve the bill, we may take action to collect payment from those patients who seem to have the means to pay for the care they received. These actions represent a very small percentage of the hospital's patient encounters each year. Unfortunately, sometimes pursuing through collections is the only way to get people to engage in a conversation about what they owe.

Our hospital already has policies in place against pursuing collection suits against anyone who is unemployed and without means to pay their hospital bills. Individuals who are currently a defendant in a collection suit brought by Longview Regional Medical Center and lost their job due to COVID-19 can call 866-450-0044.