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June 17, 2025

The Honorable Bill Lee
Governor of Tennessee
1st Floor, State Capitol
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Governor Lee,

Today, Consumers' Research, the nation's oldest consumer advocacy organization, is issuing a *Consumer Warning* focused on nonprofit hospital systems across the United States using taxpayer-sponsored resources to fund ideologically charged policies and programming. As part of this campaign, we focused on Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC) for prioritizing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and gender ideology which run counter to Tennesseans' values.

As noted in the report, many nonprofit hospital systems have leveraged numerous funding streams from the federal government and benefits from their tax-exempt status to advance controversial political and social causes rather than serve their community. This means that taxpayers are wrongly left footing the bill for hospitals' political activism.

VUMC relies heavily on federal funding and grants from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), [receiving](#) \$468 million in NIH grants in 2024, the second most in the country. In 2023, CEO Jeffrey Balser was [paid](#) more than \$6.9 million in compensation. After President Trump issued an executive order ending federal funding for entities that support DEI initiatives, VUMC [began](#) removing or restricting access to many of its DEI-related webpages in an attempt to hide its radical ideology. After pushback from Senator Blackburn, VUMC stated it was ["eliminating"](#) all DEI programs, but whether the organization has truly turned the page on DEI will bear out in coming months and years.

Since 2021, Consumers' Research has raised the alarm and educated consumers through the [Consumers First Initiative](#) about the dangers of woke capitalism and how institutions and companies pushing an activist agenda are betraying their customers. Recently, we expanded our consumer education [initiative](#) to include hospitals nationwide that are prioritizing political ideology over patients. Just like in companies and academia, there is no room for woke politics in our health systems. Such behavior stands in direct opposition to the [policies](#) of President Trump and his administration. Through [executive orders](#) and agency actions, President Trump

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has worked to eliminate woke politics, including DEI initiatives, from institutions like hospitals. It is time for the health systems highlighted in the *Consumer Warning* and others engaging in these political agendas to refocus on their core mission of providing exemplary care to patients at low costs.

We urge you to again take a stand and demand hospitals in Tennessee cease their left-wing activism and ensure that nonprofit healthcare institutions prioritize patient care over political agendas. Consumers' Research trusts you will act in the best interests of your constituents and the values they hold dear.

Sincerely,

Will Hild

William Hild
Executive Director, Consumers' Research

CC: Tennessee Department of Health Commissioner Ralph Alvarado, MD, FACP

Attachment:

Consumers' Research Consumer Warning: Woke Hospitals: Embracing Political Priorities Ahead of Patient Care

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