



Young Chin

Minister of Health & Welfare

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Joon-pyo Hong, Governor, South Gyeongsang
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Dear Mr Minister Young Chin,

Public healthcare in Korea endangered – save Jinju Medical Center

I write to you on behalf of 20 million public sector workers in health, social and public services who are members of the global trade union federation Public Services International (PSI). We have been informed by PSI affiliates in South Korea that the South Gyeongsang Provincial Government has announced the forced closure of the Jinju Medical Center, citing the center's operational deficit, on 26th February 2013. On behalf of Public Services International and our members in Korea and around the world, I write to you to express deep concern about this decision.

This will be the first forced closure of a public hospital in South Korea's history. The decision to close the center was made unilaterally without any prior discussion with stakeholders. I am deeply concerned that as community opposition to the closure of the medical center has grown stronger – authorities have responded by trying to lay blame on the union at the medical center. PSI demands that this misinformation campaign be stopped immediately against the vital public service workers who are committed to delivering affordable, accessible quality public services for the benefit of all citizens.

The state of public healthcare in South Korea is extremely weak, with less than 6% of hospitals being public. Given the gravity of this situation, the closure of a public hospital is difficult to understand. Cutting public healthcare services based on arbitrary measures of a healthcare facility's 'profitability' simply cannot be condoned. Quality public health care is important to families, societies and the economy – because healthy workers and families are more productive. PSI believes that care must be available to all people who need it, not just to those who pay.

PSI urgently calls on the South Korean administration and South Gyeongsang Provincial Government to immediately withdraw plans for the forced closure of the Jinju Medical Center, and to work with the knowledgeable and committed public service workers at the center to increase measures for a sustainable operation.

PSI will continue to work together with our affiliates in South Korea and around the world to prevent the closure of the Jinju Medical Center. We urge you to reconsider your decision and to address real health concerns in South Korea through supporting stronger public healthcare systems.

Most sincerely,

Rosa Pavanelli
PSI General Secretary