

## NAACP asks for hold on Alliance breakup

Business Courier of Cincinnati - by [James Ritchie](#) Staff Reporter

**The Cincinnati NAACP** has asked Ohio's attorney general to delay any breakup of the Health Alliance.

**The Health Alliance**, which was once Greater Cincinnati's largest hospital system, is likely to dissolve if a proposed sale of one of its members, **Jewish Hospital**, is completed.

Christopher Smitherman, president of the Cincinnati NAACP, wrote a letter to Ohio Attorney General Richard Cordray asking him to "disallow any breakup of the Health Alliance until a clear plan is presented to this community on how to prevent the negative consequences of such an organizational split and a comprehensive plan that clearly shows safety-net service sustainability in this community and region."

If the institutions involved "wish to behave like for-profit institutions without a concern for the communities they serve," Smitherman wrote, then their nonprofit, tax-exempt status should be challenged.

The Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati is trying to take hospital out of the Health Alliance and sell it to **Mercy Health Partners** for \$180 million. The pending deal **was first announced** in July.

In addition to Jewish, the Health Alliance consists of University Hospital, Fort Hamilton Hospital, the Drake Center and West Chester Medical Center.

University of Cincinnati leaders have complained that the profitability that's made Jewish an attractive acquisition target effectively came through subsidies by University Hospital. Now the UC board accuses the Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati of wanting to take the money and run.

Any destabilization of University Hospital, the board claims, could lead to cuts of services, resident training, education and research.

State Sen. Eric Kearney has written to the attorney general suggesting that "a pause is needed" in the proposed sale of Jewish.

"Jewish Hospital is, in fact, concerned about the same issues raised by Mr. Smitherman," the hospital said in a statement. "This is our community, too. We and our partners at Mercy are working hard to find a viable, regional response to the regional issues of indigent care and medical education. But we all must acknowledge that the Health Alliance is a failed business model and has been since The Christ Hospital left it. Rather than look backward, we need to start solving these issues right now. Putting off hard choices only makes us

further away from solutions. We at Jewish Hospital are committed to playing a leading role in finding those solutions."

Cincinnati City Council is holding public hearings on the issue.