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## Hospitals asked to delay merger

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Ohio Attorney General Richard Cordray has asked Jewish Hospital and Mercy Health Partners to delay their merger for two months.

The two hospitals had hoped to complete the \$180 million deal shortly after New Year's Day, but Cordray's office wants to give mediation between Jewish and University hospitals a chance to work.

Both Jewish and University are members of the Health Alliance of Greater Cincinnati, which will dissolve when Jewish merges with the five-hospital Mercy System. Leaders at the University of Cincinnati worry the Health Alliance's collapse could compromise the charity-care and medical education missions at University Hospital.

"We believe that mediation could lead to a resolution which would minimize any harmful effects on the public that may result from Jewish Hospital's potential departure," Cordray wrote in the Dec. 18 letter, asking Jewish to give mediation "a reasonable period of time."

UC officials have been asking for a delay for months. They say without the benefits of a hospital system they'll have trouble maintaining the physical plant at the Corryville hospital and continuing to provide unique services such as the region's only top-level trauma center.

The Health Alliance includes Jewish, University and Fort Hamilton hospitals, West Chester Medical Center, the Drake Center and the Alliance Primary Care doctors group.

Leaders of the Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati, which is selling Jewish Hospital, argue that they gave the Health Alliance plenty of chances to make the deal itself and that it's unfair to hold them solely responsible for the future of University Hospital.

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