THE HOSPITAL: St. Mary’s Health Care System, Inc. in Athens, Georgia participates in the 340B program. St. Mary’s Hospital is a community hospital serving the people of Clarke county Georgia and surrounding counties.

THE BENEFITS OF THE 340B PROGRAM: We benefit from the 340B program in a number of ways. One way our communities benefit from the program is through our Infusion Center. This is an off-site Infusion Center for which we are eligible to purchase 340B drugs. This Center is a very active and a very valuable resource for the residents in our community and surrounding communities. The Infusion Center serves patients by administering medications on an outpatient basis. These patients are scheduled by appointment and come to the Center to get their medications administered and go back home the same day. Our pharmacy prepares these medications and our nursing staff administers these medications. Our nurses have developed wonderful and caring relationships with many of these patients. Many of these patients have been coming to the Center for several years. Medications administered to our patients include antibiotics, medications for rheumatoid arthritis, ulcerative colitis, Crohn’s disease, refractory chronic gout, moderate to severe psoriasis, osteoporosis, rejection prophylaxis for kidney transplants, just to name a few. Many of these drugs are very expensive and they cannot be self-administered. Many of our patients are also Medicare patients. Patients in our community would find it difficult to get these services elsewhere. When we purchase these drugs at 340B pricing, with the savings, we can sustain the Infusion Center. However, if we have to purchase these drugs at GPO prices, our reimbursement is many times less than our cost. So this puts our Infusion Center at risk of curtailing services to the patients in our community or possibly closing the Infusion Center.

In addition to the value given above for our patients, the 340B savings have helped to offset the cost of operating our Pediatric Specialty Clinic. This clinic is sponsored by our hospital and serves as a multispecialty clinic for pediatric specialists from Atlanta and Augusta, GA to provide local outpatient services to families in our area. Without this clinic, many parents would have to travel to Atlanta or Augusta to access these needed specialty services with the burden of more time away from work or the kids being away from school. This is another very valuable service to our community, which would be difficult to maintain if we did not benefit from the savings the 340B drug pricing program.

Also, the savings from the 340B drug pricing program have allowed us to begin an Obstetrics Hospitalist program. The program provides for 24 hours per day hospitalist coverage for our obstetrics patients and has enhanced the level of access, care, and safety we are able to provide when time is of the essence. Without the savings from the 340B drug pricing program, we may not be able to sustain this very valuable asset to our community.

IMPACT IF THE PROGRAM WAS SCALING BACK: If the 340B program were scaled back, valuable services to our community, such as our Infusion Center, Pediatric Specialty Clinic, and Obstetrics Hospitalist program would be jeopardized and possibly unsustainable. The patients we serve may need to seek these services elsewhere, at a burdensome distance from their homes.