

Greenwood Leflore Hospital warns of closure as Medicaid moves to withhold \$2.4 million payment

Mississippi Today
by Gwen Dilworth
The Mississippi Division of Medicaid filed papers Wednesday asking a bankruptcy court for permission to withhold a scheduled roughly \$2.4 million payment to Greenwood Leflore Hospital. But hospital officials say a missed payment could force the struggling facility to close by June 30 and derail a proposed agreement for the University of Mississippi Medical Center to take over its operations.

In a motion filed in federal district court the same day in a separate case, Greenwood Leflore Hospital asked a judge to order the Division of Medicaid to make the June payment as scheduled or for the case to be sent back to chancery court. The hospital's attorneys argued the agency is seeking to bypass a chancery court order in March that forced the division to temporarily stop collecting money owed by the hospital.

Attorneys warned if the 25-bed hospital, which has faced serious financial challenges since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, does not receive the payment, it

will collapse before it can finalize an agreement with UMMC and irreparably harm people who depend on the facility for health-care services. The hospital, which is owned by the city of Greenwood and Leflore County, expects to complete the agreement by Aug. 1, according to a Wednesday court filing.

"The Division of Medicaid has lost sight of the fact this hospital is maintaining access to physician clinics, emergency room, inpatient and surgical care for the residents of the Central Delta region of the state," Gary Marchand, a consultant advising the hospital's board and former interim CEO, said in a written statement to Mississippi Today. "We have no other words."

The Division of Medicaid wrote in a court filing that the hospital owes "somewhere in the neighborhood of \$10 million" and contended it has the right to withhold the money because the chancery court's order applied only to those tied to 2024 supplemental payments and does not prevent the agency from withholding the payments for the

current year.

Matt Westerfield, a spokesperson for the Division of Medicaid, declined to comment, saying it would be inappropriate to do so during litigation.

On Thursday, the board for the Institutions of Higher Learning, which governs Mississippi's public universities, approved the proposed transfer of Greenwood Leflore Hospital to UMMC.

"UMMC intends to utilize the facility to expand health-care services and create additional training opportunities for students, residents and fellows in a community hospital setting," said John Pearce, the agency's senior associate commissioner for finance.

UMMC declined to comment.

Greenwood Leflore Hospital's financial challenges have intensified this year. To stabilize its operations, the hospital in April laid off 86 staff members, closed clinics and filed for bankruptcy. Hospital and local officials said the changes were intended to ensure the hospital can continue to provide healthcare while it

untarily implementing conservation practices such as cover crops, wildflower and native plantings in buffers, and areas not in production.

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) can also be used to enhance habitat to protect pollinators. Administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency, the CRP is a land conservation program in which enrolled landowners remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and plant species that will improve environmental health and quality.

When we protect pollinators, we protect our ability to grow food. We thank our farmers, ranchers, and private forest landowners who offer a safe haven for pollinators and grow the products we enjoy.

Whether you are a large commodity producer, a small and diverse organic producer, or even a suburban homeowner, you can have an important role in saving pollinators in Mississippi.

James L. Cummins is executive director of Wildlife Mississippi, a non-profit conservation organization founded to conserve, restore, and enhance fish, wildlife, and plant resources throughout Mississippi. Their web site is www.wildlifemiss.org.

negotiated the possibility of a large health system taking over its services.

On June 7, the hospital filed a bankruptcy court document outlining a plan for the donation of its operations and facilities to UMMC, the state's only academic medical center. Under the proposal, UMMC will not be considered a successor to the Greenwood hospital and cannot be held liable for debts not covered by the agreement.

In a court filing, Greenwood Leflore Hospital wrote the transfer of its operations to UMMC is the only viable option to continue providing quality healthcare to Leflore County and the surrounding areas of the Delta.

"The economic and regulatory headwinds adversely affecting all community hospitals are insurmountable impediments that in the judgement of the Board of Commissioners and senior management of GLH, make GLH's long-term viability unsustainable," a June 7 filing states.

The bankruptcy judge would have to confirm the plan before it could take effect.

The Wednesday court filings escalate an ongoing dispute between the state agency and the Greenwood public hospital over how quickly the hospital must repay debts that stem from a program designed to supplement hospitals' low Medicaid reimbursements.

The payments, which began in 2024, initially provided a financial boost to the hospital. But they were later recalculated using updated patient volume data as part of a routine process that found the initial amount of funding was too high. That discrepancy occurred because state officials did not account for declining patient volumes after the hospital closed its labor and delivery and intensive care units in 2022.

In June 2025, Medicaid notified the hospital it would recoup \$5.5 million from the hospital's 2024 payments.

Hospital officials have repeatedly warned that the debt repayment could force the facility to close, prompting a Hinds County chancery judge in March to direct the division to temporarily suspend collection efforts.

In its Wednesday filing in bankruptcy court, Medicaid said it would continue reimbursing the hospital for routine medical claims. It also said that if the court orders payments to continue, strict safeguards should be put in place to dictate how the funds are spent. Attorneys said the hospital should only be allowed to use the money for expenses necessary to "literally 'keep the doors open.'"

THE WICKER REPORT
SENATOR WICKER'S WEEKLY REPORT from CONGRESS

Wicker Honors Mississippi Civil Rights Story

Mississippi Landmarks Keep History Alive

In two weeks, Americans will celebrate the 250th Independence Day—the occasion when our founders proclaimed to the world that “all men are created equal” and that governments must derive their power “from the consent of the governed.” As I write this column, we are marking another important American holiday. Juneteenth is a day that tells the story of how we have learned to live up to the lofty ideals declared on the first July 4th.

Juneteenth was celebrated on June 19th across our country long before it was officially designated as a federal holiday five years ago. On that date in 1865, General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, and issued the last enforcement of the Emancipation Proclamation. With the end of slavery, America moved one giant step closer to recognizing every person's God-given right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Not surprisingly, Texas was the first state to recognize Juneteenth. But today the entire nation honors the day, giving communities the chance to reflect on America's civil rights history. This Juneteenth, I am reflecting on two Mississippi landmarks that showcase our state's part in this story.

Lyceum Bears Witness to History

I recently had the opportunity to speak about the history of the Lyceum building, which sits at the heart of the University of Mississippi campus. The iconic landmark was completed in 1848. Much of its original section was built by enslaved persons.

Two decades later, during the Civil War—our nation's reckoning over slavery—the Lyceum became a military hospital. Thanks to the persuasive intervention of a university professor and the vision of General Ulysses S. Grant, the building escaped destruction.

A century later, federal officials came to Ole Miss to integrate the campus. They used the Lyceum as their headquarters, and the building bore witness to a milestone in American history. The president had to call in the National Guard to quell

violence as James Meredith became the first African American to enroll at the university, boldly enduring prejudice, harassment, and danger.

Over the years, the Lyceum grew and developed, just as our country did. School officials added a lecture hall, a chemistry laboratory, and two new wings—all without sacrificing its beauty. In both its history and its architecture, the building tells an important part of Mississippi's story.

Evers Home Preserves History

In Jackson, Mississippians recently marked the anniversary of Medgar Evers' assassination by visiting the Medgar and Myrlie Evers Home. The property has been restored to appear as it did when these civil rights leaders lived at the home.

Medgar Evers served in World War II, helping save the world from tyranny. When he returned from Europe, Evers devoted his life to expanding economic opportunity, voting rights, and access to public facilities for African Americans. Echoing the ideals of the Declaration of Independence, he said, “the gifts of God should be enjoyed by all citizens in Mississippi.”

When I was just 11 years old, Medgar Evers was struck by an assassin's bullet outside his home. That day is etched in the memory of many Mississippians. It is important that his story not be forgotten, but over the years, Medgar Evers' life has begun passing from living memory.

In 2019, Senator Hyde-Smith, Congressman Thompson, and I reintroduced legislation to designate the family home as a national monument. That bill became law that year, and the home permanently stands as a tangible record of the Evers' story. In 2024, the Mississippi congressional delegation also secured a posthumous Presidential Medal of Freedom award for this civil rights hero.

As we celebrate Juneteenth and our upcoming 250th Independence Day, these Mississippi landmarks remind us of the remarkable values in our founding documents and of the courageous individuals who have fought to extend them to all Americans.

Conservation Corner

by James Cummins
Executive Director
of Wildlife Mississippi

**National Pollinator Week,
June 22-28**

The next time you snack on almonds, add blueberries to your smoothie, or eat pumpkin pie, thank a pollinator, and thank farmers, ranchers, and private forestland owners who work hard to create and maintain their habitat.

Pollinators, such as honeybees, bumblebees, butterflies, birds, bats, flies, and many others, play a critical role in crop production. Without pollinators, we wouldn't have many crops.

During the week of June 22-28, the nation will celebrate these iconic and crucial pollinators during National Pollinator Week. The U.S. Senate designated the third week in June as National Pollinator Week to increase awareness about the importance of pollinators and the challenges many of them face, including serious population declines and habitat losses, often due to land use changes and excessive or improper pesticide use. Nearly 200 species of pollinators are considered threatened or extinct.

Pollination occurs when pollen grains are moved

between two flowers of the same species, or within a single flower by wind or insects and animals. Successful pollination results in healthy fruit and fertile seeds, allowing the plants to reproduce.

The extensive and critical world of crop pollinators is a \$20 billion a year industry. About 75% of crop plants are polluted by billions of animals and insects every year.

Many federal, state, and local government agencies, non-government organizations, and universities have launched extensive efforts to protect pollinators, especially honeybees and the monarch butterfly. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) works closely with farmers, forest landowners, and other private landowners to increase pollinator habitat in targeted areas nationwide.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program, through USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, offers financial incentives to agricultural producers and private forest landowners who enhance pollinator habitat by vol-