

News

State regulators approve UConn bid to buy Waterbury Hospital



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The Connecticut Office of Health Strategy (OHS) approved the University of Connecticut’s application to purchase Waterbury Hospital on Friday, following the bankruptcy of previous owner Prospect Medical Holdings.

UConn Health will pay \$13 million for the hospital, located on Robbins Street, as part of an anticipated \$225 million investment from state bonds over the next five years. The acquisition complements UConn’s John Dempsey Hospital in Farmington, Conn.

“I’m confident we’re moving toward a much stronger and brighter future for the facilities owned by Prospect,” said

UConn Waterbury Hospital, one of two hospitals that serve the Greater Waterbury region. UConn has bought Waterbury Hospital for \$13 million after the previous owner has filed bankruptcy.
PHOTO COURTESY OF @UCONNHEALTH ON INSTAGRAM.

Gov. Ned Lamont in a statement. “While the path ahead is not without challenges, UConn Health has shown real leadership by stepping up and prioritizing the health care needs of the Greater Waterbury community.”

The state’s decision requires UConn Health to evaluate the condition of the hospital’s 136-year-old building with a “strategic integration plan,” and engage with the community in a community health needs assessment process within nine months, whilst maintaining or enhancing the services formerly offered at the hospital and existing outpatient and non-hospital doctor’s offices for at least three

years.

UConn is additionally required to adopt existing insurance reimbursement rates and negotiate future rates separately from other hospitals.

OHS noted that the Connecticut Office of the Attorney General and Department of Public Health have regulatory oversight over the transaction and may impose additional conditions.

According to OHS, UConn Health was the only bidder for Waterbury Hospital in last year’s bankruptcy auction. They concluded that approving UConn’s bid would prevent the facility from closing permanently, “potentially creating

a gap in access to certain inpatient and outpatient services or straining existing providers within the service area.”

The rest of Prospect’s Connecticut portfolio, the Eastern Connecticut Health Network, comprising Rockville General and Manchester Memorial hospitals, were acquired by Hartford Healthcare for \$86 million last month.

UConn Health, in their “certificate of need” application to OHS, said their plan for Waterbury Hospital includes “updating and moderniz[ing]” the facility’s emergency medical service, addressing doctor retention, strengthening access to women’s healthcare and enhancing specialized services like ambulatory surgical facilities and oncology programs.

The application also requests that regulators allow “a number of beds” currently under Waterbury Hospital’s license to be, as needed, reallocated under UConn’s current John Dempsey Hospital license to “support returning patient volume from the Waterbury area currently seen at JDH...or allowing JDH to operate a service...where patient access, cost or quality outcomes might be improved.”

“Returning Waterbury Health assets to nonprofit ownership will help ensure that financial resources, capital investments, and strategic planning remain focused on community health needs rather than private interests,” Bill Pizuto, State Representative for the 71st District, said in support of the deal. “A transition to UConn Health represents the best possible outcome for Waterbury Health and the communities it serves.”

\$8.8 million of the purchase price will go to the City of Waterbury for back taxes and utility costs as part of a settlement in Prospect’s bankruptcy proceedings.

Prospect acquired Waterbury Hospital for \$43.3 million in 2016. The group’s three Connecticut hospitals were to be acquired by a joint venture between Yale-New Haven Health and Dallas-based Tenet Healthcare circa 2014 in a deal that fell through; Yale tried again, unsuccessfully, to acquire Prospect’s holdings in 2022.

“The decision serves the needs of patients, families and communities in the Greater Waterbury area,” said Amy Porter, acting OHS commissioner. “Ensuring continued access to quality care for Connecticut residents impacted by the Prospect Medical bankruptcy has been a priority for Governor Lamont and OHS.”

While UConn Health is primarily based at John Dempsey Hospital in Farmington, the system operates a number of specialized and general care facilities statewide — including an urgent care location near the main UConn campus in Storrs-Mansfield.

Waterbury Hospital is one of two medical centers in Waterbury, the other being Saint Mary’s Hospital, an affiliate of Trinity New England. Both service over a dozen towns in the Naugatuck River Valley area.

Attorney General Tong leads bipartisan action against AI chatbot Grok for generating “nonconsensual sexual content”

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Connecticut Attorney General William Tong announced that he was leading a bipartisan effort against Grok, an AI chatbot, to prevent it from “generating nonconsensual intimate images and child sexual abuse material,” according to a Jan. 23 press release.

Tong is joined by 35 attorneys general from across the country. The coalition reflects widespread concern and worry about the exploitation of artificial intelligence and the role AI companies play in this misconduct. Attorneys general from states such as North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Virginia and New York, along with attorneys general from U.S. territories, such as American Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands.

Grok is an AI chatbot developed by xAI, a company owned by Elon Musk, which also overlooks the social media platform X, formerly Twitter.

Tong argues that Grok has made it quite easy for users to create and share sexualized images of women and children. Users of the chatbot can simply prompt Grok to place individuals in sexualized scenarios, often resulting in online exploitation of minors.

The coalition wrote a letter to xAI, saying that they are “deeply concerned about artificial intelligence produced deepfake nonconsensual intimate images (NCII) of real people, including children.”

“One analysis of 20,000 images generated by Grok between Christmas and New Year’s found that over half of those images depicted subjects—even those appearing to be children—in minimal at-

tire,” the coalition wrote.

Tong called Grok a “monster” in his press release and said that “it’s on [Musk and xAI]” to prevent Grok from generating these images and to hold “bad actors” accountable.

“xAI has enabled a torrent of vile sexualized content, including abusive and disgusting nonconsensual fake sexual images of women and children,” Tong said in his press release “Elon Musk and xAI unleashed this monster, and it’s on them to immediately pull down abusive content, decisively disable Grok’s ability to produce these images, and to hold bad actors on their platform accountable.”

Tong said that the attorneys general are prepared to “pursue all available legal remedies should this online abuse continue.”

According to the letter, though xAI has implemented mechanisms to reduce such

content, the methods are limited and do not seem to be consistently enforced. The attorneys general want assurance that the safeguards put in place are effective.

Alongside the attorney general’s coalition, there will soon be a federal mandate under the TAKE IT DOWN Act that would force the removal of non-consensual images in May 2026, according to the press release. There have already been warnings that Grok’s activity might violate state or federal law, especially in regard to child sexual abuse material.



Connecticut Attorney General William Tong. Tong is leading an effort to prevent the AI chatbot Grok from creating explicit images of minors. PHOTO COURTESY OF CREATIVE COMMONS.

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