



To our entire South Coast community:

Today, we as a nation commemorate the life and death of a leader for the ages.

Beaten, jailed and ultimately assassinated, he never held an official position of power, yet commanded the respect and attention of countless human beings around the world – from Atlanta, where he was born, to Oslo, where he received the Nobel Peace Prize, and all points in between – bearing only the titles bestowed by his own deep devotion and advanced education.

**Reverend. Doctor.**

A century after the Civil War, he marshalled forces from far and wide to mobilize a movement for Civil Rights. Sixty years later, the spirit of this movement endures, as each one of us is personally responsible for leading by example, achieving strength through peace.

But any chance at this achievement continues to require an unwavering commitment to humanity – doing what is right for the greater good, putting others first and, in turn, trusting them to do the same. This is how we care for one another ... and when that dynamic breaks down, so, too, can society.

On January 13, Bernice King, CEO of the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, shared a message that has stayed with me since.

**In it, she quoted her father, the man we honor today: “True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice.”**

This week, we look forward to what we hope will be a peaceful transition of power. One that ushers in more understanding, more decency and more respect.

Differing opinions on important issues keep any democracy healthy and thriving, but it is *how* we communicate, appreciate and work through those differences that have always been the hallmark of our republic, and what has positioned America as the country the rest of the globe looks to as a light leading the way through the darkest of times.

In recent weeks, months and years, we have seen that light flicker and even fade. We must not allow it.

**My message today is simple: Southcoast stands immovably on the side of equality, civility and empathy.**

As a not-for-profit community health system, we have the privilege and duty to serve more than a half-million patients across a thousand square miles, from Aquidneck Island to the Cape.

We exist to serve others. To put our community and its people first. To provide the highest quality care and service to all who need us. To make a difference by positively impacting the quality of life for each resident of our region. To contribute to the success and vitality of southeastern Massachusetts and R.I.

**The entire Southcoast Health family – every single one of us – has an essential role in this effort.**

Regardless of our respective worldviews, there is only one cause that matters.

**Then, now and always, that cause is ... humanity.**

United in this pursuit, we must lead with a compassionate heart. One Southcoast Health – and one community – serving and caring for each other. Because it is the right thing to do.

Toward this end, we established the [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council](#) in 2019, and the Black Lives Matter Coalition in 2020. The mission of these employee resource groups is to ensure authentic engagement, offer a safe space for meaningful dialogue and catalyze needed change through action.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic and other challenges, we cannot lose sight of what makes us truly proud Americans – and citizens of the world.

History tells us that human beings are at our best when we come together to address a common cause, but the past 12 months and beyond have tested our civilization in ways we have seen only in textbooks, newsreels and stories passed down through generations.

**So, let us step up, as the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and others have before us, and pledge to do our part in fostering genuine kindness, courage and dignity every day ... while never yielding to division, hatred and intolerance.**

This is our commitment to MLK's legacy – and to each other.

With gratitude,



Keith Hovan  
President and CEO  
Southcoast Health