We applaud the Federal Trade Commission for doing what is right for Americans, and for challenging the U.S. District Court’s ruling that would have allowed the merger of Penn State Hershey Medical Center and Pinnacle Health System in Harrisburg. (‘FTC will keep fighting Pa. hospital merger despite court loss” — Modern Healthcare, May 11, 2016.)

What judges like U.S. District Judge John Jones need to realize is that the consolidation of health-care systems hurts everyone — except for the hospital executives who profit from these mergers.

Regardless of what these health systems promise, no study has ever shown that consolidation lowers health-care costs. In fact, the opposite is true.

Thus, the FTC correctly argues that the merger would lead to higher prices and poorer quality.

Just because the government has “created a climate that virtually compels institutions to seek alliances such as the hospitals intended here,” as Jones wrote in his opinion, doesn’t mean Americans should rubber stamp moves that will continue to cause our health-care costs to skyrocket.

The FTC appeal has put this merger on ice while the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit considers whether to bless or block the consolidation.

In making its decision, I hope the appeals court takes a good look at the Idaho case, where last year the U.S. Appeals Court for the Ninth District upheld a lower court’s decision that a major Idaho health system had to unwind its acquisition of a large medical practice because it would harm the community.

The Association of Independent Doctors, a national trade association for which I serve as executive director, wrote an amicus brief for that case asking the court to do what it did, and send a loud message to other health systems looking to merge and form monopolies.

We hope clear minds also prevail in the Pennsylvania decision, and then again in Chicago, where the merger between NorthShore University and Advocate Health Care is also being challenged in federal court, and in Eastern Tennessee, and everywhere else in the country where mergers are harming communities and driving up costs.

The FTC is our best hope.

Marni Jameson Carey

Executive Director

The Association of Independent Doctors

Read or Share this story: http://on-ydr.co/1TeGHOG