



# CRITICAL QUESTIONS

Every Hospital Board Needs  
to be Able to Answer



Developed for the Kansas Hospital Association by  
The Walker Company Healthcare Consulting



“Critical Questions Every Hospital Board Needs to be Able to Answer” was developed by The Walker Company, an Oregon-based health care consulting firm. The Walker Company provides a comprehensive array of governance development services, including governance education, governance resources and toolkits, board performance self-assessments, analysis of governance structures and practices, and focus groups.

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## **Introduction**

**A**ccording to the American Hospital Association, there are over 2,800 nongovernment not-for-profit community hospitals in the United States, and just over 1,000 state and local government community hospitals. The nation's hospitals employ over 5.4 million people for a wide range of skill levels and are one of the largest sources of private sector jobs. Hospitals in the U.S. contribute much more than clinical care. They play an integral role in what's right with America's health care system, acting as centers of innovation and education, working outside their walls to improve community health, providing free and discounted care to uninsured and underinsured patients, and contributing significantly to their local economies.

America's health care system is undergoing significant transformation, and hospitals are seeking new ways to deliver value-based care, improve the health of their patients and communities and ultimately elevate "what's right with health care" to a new level. Many hospitals and health systems are aligning and integrating services across the continuum of care, but at the same time are confronting significant financial pressures as they seek to cross the chasm from a fee-for-service based system to a value-based payment system.

Trustees play a significant role in the transformation of health care and must demonstrate strong leadership to navigate through the challenges their organizations are confronting. Board service has never been more challenging. The future of health care is still largely unknown, and the range of board responsibilities is broad. Hospitals and health systems need dedicated and knowledgeable individuals who are willing to commit their time, experience, expertise and leadership to the hospital, its mission and the community.

This document has been developed as a resource for trustees seeking to ensure their board discussions, deliberations and decisions are well-informed and evidence based, as they lead their organizations into the future.