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March 18, 2011

RECEIVED

Dale Galassie
Chair
Illinois Health Facilities and
Services Review Board

MAR 21 2011

**HEALTH FACILITIES &
SERVICES REVIEW BOARD**

Dear Chairman Galassie:

We are writing to urge you and your fellow board members to deny the request by the Cook County Health and Hospitals System to discontinue Oak Forest Hospital as an acute care hospital because of the adverse affect it will have on the regional health services.

After a review of the discontinuation request, the Illinois Department of Public Health has found that:

Given the large number of safety net patients Oak Forest Hospital provides care for it does appear that the proposed discontinuation will have an adverse impact on access to care in the service area.

Therefore the agency concludes "the proposed project does not appear to be in conformance with the discontinuation Review Criterion (77 IAC 1110.130)."

Those findings reflect the same concerns of our constituents, including patients, health care providers, and several of the largest hospitals in the Southland region. Many of those concerns were voiced at the public hearing held in January, whose participants were nearly universal in opposing the hospital's discontinuation.

As the county's health system is well aware, the south suburbs and far south side of Chicago are an area that is demonstrably underserved in medical and health care services. Oak Forest plays a crucial role in providing those services, especially to the uninsured those of limited means. As the Department's review has made clear, closing the hospital will further aggravate that inadequacy, at a time when the need for those services is growing.

We ask that you reject the Cook County request at your March 21 meeting.

Sincerely,

Joi W. Hutchinson