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HEALTH FACILITIES &
SERVICES REVIEW BOARD

On the matter of Project No. 10-089: Mercy's Application for a Hospital in Crystal Lake

I am an internist currently on staff at Centegra, Sherman and Provena St. Joseph Hospitals. I have lived and practiced in the McHenry County area for the past 23 years. In that time, I have seen the average hospital length of stay diminish by more than half and an increasing number of procedures moved out of the hospital because it is more cost effective. The intent of the Healthcare Reform Bill is clear. It will further affect these numbers as it ratchets down reimbursements to hospitals. Formulas that used population numbers to determine hospital needs will no longer be reliable.

Our county's 2010 census data was reported in the February 17, 2011 Northwest Herald. Five of the twenty-nine communities in this proposed hospital's service area reported declining populations. Furthermore, the county growth, while positive, was about 18,000 less than predicted, according to the paper. The March 8th headline read "Residential Development Still Stalled". The article goes on to say "Scores of development projects throughout McHenry County remain on hold as the effects of the recession linger." A new hospital here makes no sense.

The hospital claims the \$250 million cost of the new building will not fall to the taxpayer. We should not be that naïve. The federal government recently announced a 103 billion dollar cut in Medicaid funding to the states. Despite a 67% tax hike, the State of Illinois is 10.1 billion dollars in debt and will be unable to make up the difference. The cost of maintaining a new hospital can only fall on its citizens.

We will pay for it in higher costs of medical services and insurance rates, bigger out of pocket expenses and hidden fees called facility charges. The patients in this area already pay 25% higher rates than the national average for their healthcare and that will only get worse. Recently, a patient of mine told me of her \$600 bill for cholesterol testing. If we think these charges are out of line, wait until we have to support the overhead of another hospital.

We find ourselves in this financial situation because we have wanted what we can not afford to buy. We have depended on our elected and appointed officials to do the courageous, right thing and just say no.

It is time that we turn to our hospital executives and urge them to find a way to work together. If they want to leave their mark on the landscape of healthcare, let them do it using the blueprint of cooperation. Because if they did, what they would construct would be so totally unique, of far greater benefit to patients and more enduring significance than any building they could conceive of.

But it all comes down to you. We depend on you to evaluate Certificates of Need not Certificates of Want. We don't need a 4th hospital within 10 min of Crystal Lake. Mercy tried to convince you otherwise 8 years ago and we have done the test of time. While no one can predict the future, taking an "if we build it they will come approach" in this economic climate can only put us further in debt. If we are going to stop mortgaging our future for generations to come, we have to learn to live within our means. What we NEED is your help to do that.

Sincerely,
Barbara E. Amsler, MD

