



The Hope Light Foundation

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March 6, 2013

Ms. Courtney R. Avery, Administrator
Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board
525 W. Jefferson, 2nd Floor
Springfield, IL 62761

Re: SIH Cancer Center, Project #13-005

Dear Ms. Avery,

On behalf of The Hope Light Foundation and myself personally, it is my honor to endorse the Southern Illinois Healthcare's (SIH) Cancer Center Project that will serve cancer patients in rural southern Illinois.

The southern Illinois region has the states greatest need for help in the fight against cancer where 50% of the Top 20 counties with the highest all-cancers death rate are located. Of the fifteen counties served by SIH, eight are listed in these Top 20 counties with most being medically underserved with health professional shortages, high poverty rates and limited/no access to oncology physicians. The average death rate in these eight counties is 28% higher than the United States average rate. The new Cancer Center will bring much needed cancer care to the region that will reduce the burden of cancer patients traveling away from home to obtain life-saving cancer services and will increase the oncology expertise to detect cancer early and decrease deaths from this deadly disease.

I can personally attest to the need for cancer treatment close to home. In 2001 when my Mom living in West Frankfort, IL was diagnosed with cancer, she had the choice of obtaining treatment in either Nashville, TN or St. Louis. Since I lived in St. Louis, she chose to be treated for her cancer at St. Lukes Hospital in Chesterfield, MO. This required many trips from her West Frankfort home to obtain chemotherapy treatment and become well enough to travel home. While in St. Louis, she and my Dad stayed with my wife and I and returned to West Frankfort only long enough to recover from the treatment effects and return to St. Louis for more treatment and check-ups. Being away from home and her friends in West Frankfort and taking many uncomfortable automobile trips definitely added to her mental stress and decreased her strength to fight cancer. Unfortunately, she was told that the treatments were ineffective and was given two weeks to live. Her last wish was; "I want to live long enough to go home", however, in her post-chemo weakened condition, going home was not possible.

With the new SIH Cancer Center, my Mom's situation like many others can be avoided while patients fight cancer with increased strength, less burdens and Hope for a cure while remaining at Home with their family and friends. Thank you SIH for making *Hope is Home* possible.

Respectfully,

Rudy Bess,
Founding Director – The Hope Light Foundation

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