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HEALTH FACILITIES &
SERVICES REVIEW BOARD

The Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board
Attn: Courtney Avery, Administrator
525 W. Jefferson Street
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Springfield, IL 62761-0001

I have grave concern for the plan to build the 30 bed Behavioral Health Unit in Centreville, IL replacing the two existing units.

I have worked in Mental Health in St. Clair County since 1964. I first worked at the Alton State Hospital making home visits to discharged patients throughout St. Clair County. Then I worked at the two Outpatient Mental Health Centers (East St. Louis and Belleville) as a Psychiatric Social Worker (Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW). In 1969 I became Executive Director of the largest Mental Health facility in St. Clair County with 64 beds in a JCAHO Accredited facility. ('69 – '77). In the late 80s I assisted St. Elizabeth's to plan and implement a 20 bed Alcohol and Drug Dependence Unit. I also owned and operated an Intensive Outpatient Program for Alcohol Treatment in Belleville, IL. Now I provide Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) in St. Clair County. I give this background to provide my perspective and experience to speak to this issue.

I read the article in the Belleville News Democrat this morning. My experiences above in planning treatment facilities, managing treatment facilities and working in them have given me the perspective of literally hundreds of patients.

The following summarizes why my judgment is to be against this Plan.

1. Patients in Behavioral Health have many barriers to seek Inpatient and lesser restrictive care. One of those is their fear of what a facility might be like. The geographical location planned for this facility will keep some people away. Perhaps the Belleville located facility is run by professionals who do not know the depth of the geographical and racial prejudice in this County. My professional and personal belief is that I would very much like if the two sides of this county could plan and be successful in having one facility. But, I do not feel that is in the PATIENT'S who need this service's best interest. The PATIENT always needs to come first. St. Elizabeth's Board does not live in Belleville. Perhaps they are not aware of the depth of the stigma and prejudice that is present and that will keep patients from going to this facility. Many times hospital administrators want Behavioral Health out of the hospital.

2. When I assisted over 40 hospitals in the United States to consider and plan for Behavioral Health and Substance Abuse Treatment, an acceptable geographical

location was a major concern. Businesses have long known that the success of a business relies on location, location and location.

3. When I see clients now who need Inpatient or residential care, they simply will not go to Centreville in my professional health planning and professional clinical opinion.

4. I have not read the Plan as submitted. Perhaps there are planned marketing of the facility that might address these absolutely devastating geographical and clinical roadblocks. Aftercare is one of the more reliable factors in the success of care. Inpatient care is just a beginning to stabilize behavior and medication to enable a patient to return to a less restrictive care. Going back to this physical location for outpatient and aftercare is another roadblock in their successful treatment.

5. St. Clair County is particularly racist. This racism does not get addressed or spoken of often. Are we saying "forget the racism" and its affect upon the patients with Behavioral Health problems. "If they are racist, tough - they just won't get care and it is their responsibility due to their racism".

6. The final note I will make has to do with two health planning attitudes – anywhere. It seems to me that two variables are involved in this decision. St. Elizabeth's gets rid of the Behavioral Health unit that presents problems for hospitals and Touchette gets beds and jobs for its population who needs them more than Belleville. These are not reasons for Health Planners to approve a Behavioral Health facility. The reasons need to be what is best for the PATIENT and not the facilities. Both certainly are important but not one at the expense of the other.

7. I also live in Swansea, IL and am a resident of St. Clair County.

I like the openness of this process and I thank you for considering my viewpoints.

Sincerely,

James J. Harting, LCSW, CEAP
President

JJH/j