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HEALTH FACILITIES &
SERVICES REVIEW BOARD

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Health Facilities & Services Review Board
525 W. Jefferson
Second Floor
Springfield, IL 62761

Dear Board Members

This letter is being sent to you in regard to the proposed closing of our nearest hospital, St. Mary's Hospital in Streator, IL. I was unable to attend the meeting held at Streator City Hall on October 29 because I was in Memorial Hospital in Springfield with my disabled son and could not leave his side for the 4 hour round trip back home to attend the hearing. It is my understanding that I could probably not have gotten into the hearing anyway because of the huge crowd in attendance.

St. Mary's Hospital is a beautiful facility, better than most I've seen. I hope you have seen it before making this important decision to CLOSE it. Our hospital exists because of countless volunteer hours and dollars given by people of Streator and the surrounding communities. My father solicited money from the people of the Village of Long Point as did many others from other local communities in order to build the "new" hospital. Incidentally, my great grandfather's store and home were razed to clear the land for its construction; another sacrifice. Millions of dollars have been donated since it was built to provide improvements and new treatment facilities. Actually, nearly every dollar spent to construct and maintain St. Mary's has come in one way or another from the people of Streator and the large surrounding community that it serves. While HSHS officially owns it, really, the people of Streator are the owners.

Until last week, I had no idea your board existed. Yet you, evidently, hold the power to decide the fate of the health care of the people of the Streatorland Community. As you can see by the address, we live in the rural Streator area. Our family has used the emergency room 4 times and the hospital twice in the past year. And we are just one small family who lives relatively close to town. It takes 20 minutes after calling 911 for a Streator ambulance to arrive at our home. Without help in Streator, it would be close to an hour before getting any emergency care. Even with the ER in Streator, the emergency room nurse spent about 2 hours on the phone trying to get our son transported to another location that could provide the help he needed. None was found and he ended up being admitted to St. Mary's as the only alternative. This is just one example of how remote Streator **actually** is when it comes to critical health care.

I volunteer at Guardian Angel Outreach pregnancy center in Streator. We serve many, many parents and babies in need. Many have no transportation and walk to our center. How do they get to a hospital to deliver their babies when the nearest one is at least ½

hour away? Yet, St. Mary's birthing center, a beautiful facility, closed at the end of last year. Hopefully, the statistics you have been provided tell you why. It is certainly not due to the lack of babies! Yet there will never again be a baby safely born in this community of 18,000 or more people.

Last January, I had outpatient surgery at St. Mary's Hospital and planned to have it again after the first of the year. It was an extremely busy place in outpatient surgery that morning and I had excellent care. Now I hear that the new "robust" health care facility will not include outpatient surgery. Just what it will cover is still a mystery, I guess.

Surely your board understands that every one of us will die including each of those 18,000 people. But WHERE? In the emergency room that we might possibly get? In the "robust" health care facility that is supposed to replace the hospital? In an ambulance or helicopter headed to some other destination? Yes, some will die in nursing homes but will the distance to getting care play into the decision to seek help or just keep that dying person where they are? Will the "robust" health care facility supply a state of the art hospice so that they can die at home, if there is someone at home to care for them? These are serious considerations for you to ponder. And, assuming the majority of those 18,000 people do not die in Streator, will they die alone or surrounded by their loving families? Who will bear the added expense of returning the remains home to Streator for a funeral and burial?

I realize that no health care provider can maintain a hospital that is losing money. What causes that in Streator is no doubt included in the statistics you have been provided. How another provider will turn Streator into a place that will at least break even and still meet the needs of the community is a mystery. Surely there is a better answer than tearing down what the people of Streator have built.

Sincerely



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