

The Greater **BELLEVILLE** Chamber

14-043

September 18, 2014

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

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**HEALTH FACILITIES &
SERVICES REVIEW BOARD**

Dear Ms. Avery;

The mission of the Greater Belleville Chamber of Commerce is simple: "Advancing business. Supporting community." The brevity of that statement crystalizes our expansive purpose — we exist to improve the lives of the people of Belleville, in our businesses and in our homes.

In this way, we feel our purpose and the purpose of St. Elizabeth Hospital are complimentary. And it is why we find the recent filing of the Hospital's Certificate of Need (CON) — to abandon their longtime downtown Belleville location in order to relocate to O'Fallon — is so very disappointing.

The greater Belleville community has supported the healthcare services of the hospital for more than 140 years but also through generous financial support to fund-raising efforts that total in the millions of dollars.

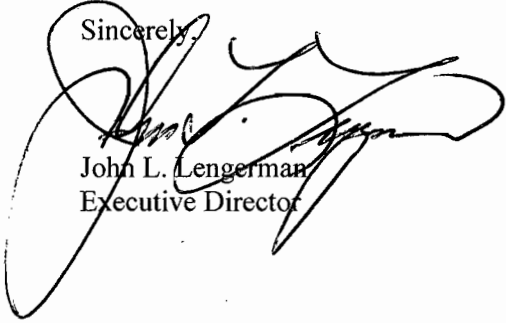
The loss of over 1,300 employees from Belleville will have a devastating impact on the people of our community economically, socially, and medically. Belleville's downtown core will be dealt a blow from which it may not easily recover, to say nothing about the fates of the many sick or injured patients the hospital serves every day. These patients and their families support our local economy in our restaurants, hotels, and gift shops. The scope of the Hospital's abandonment will send shock waves throughout the entire community of Belleville, in ways too numerous to mention.

The economic issues are easier to understand: lost jobs, lost dollars, vacant buildings. But we must consider the community impact. Loss of a full service hospital in downtown Belleville will impact many lives, including our neighbors in Freeburg, Smithton and Millstadt. Travel distance for emergency care will increase dramatically, putting ambulatory patients at greater risk. The convenience of public transportation for workers and visitors will not be available at the new location. The low income residents of Belleville, East Saint Louis, Centreville and other surrounding communities will have every right to feel abandoned.

The Chamber is not opposed to St. Elizabeth examining ways to increase its profitability and demographic reach; in fact, the Chamber would willingly partner with the Hospital to achieve its goals. However, because the Illinois Health Facilities and Services Board must approve or disapprove all hospital relocations through the CON process, we must read into the record our

most vehement objections to this relocation. We exist to support the people of this worthy community, and must thus stand opposed to St. Elizabeth's proposed move to O'Fallon. Furthermore, we respectfully request open and honest dialogue between the City of Belleville and St. Elizabeth's in constructing a new hospital in Belleville.

Sincerely,



John L. Lengerman
Executive Director

cc: City of Belleville