

February 8, 2016

Ms. Courtney Avery
Administrator
Illinois Health Facilities and
Services Review Board
525 West Jefferson
Springfield, IL 62761

RECEIVED

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HEALTH FACILITIES &
SERVICES REVIEW BOARD

RE: Franciscan St. James Health-Chicago Heights
COE E-08-16
Franciscan St. James Health-Olympia Fields
CON 16-005

Dear Ms. Avery:

Please accept this letter from Awakened Alternatives, Inc. supporting the Franciscan St. James Health restructuring plan to reorganize in the manner in which it provides health care services in the South Suburban Chicago community. It is our belief that their stated plan serves the needs of the community today and provides a stable platform to ensure that community health care needs are met into the foreseeable future.

Awakened Alternatives, Inc. is a health care management company focused on serving Medicaid, Medicare and Commercial payer markets. We have served the healthcare community for over 24 years in our current south suburban location and we are actively involved in advocacy initiatives that address Chicago Southland health care issues. Working with large Illinois payers and hospital systems gives us insight into current healthcare trends that effect improved patient outcomes as well as provide a foundation for long-term financial stability.

In sharing this letter of support, we want to be on record in support of several specific recommendations that we have brought to the attention of the Franciscan St. James Health senior management team. We hope that these recommendations can be a part of the comprehensive re-structuring of how healthcare is delivered to the greater community that Franciscan St. James Health serves. I will list them individually:


1. We support the consolidation of inpatient services as an appropriate cost savings measure, considering the fact that the two hospitals are less than 5 miles apart from each other. We understand the need for the St. James Health system to be competitive with other hospital systems in the area and that duplication of services is no longer effective management of available resources. Enhancing and expanding the Olympia Fields campus range of available services helps to attract the best providers and new clients. Additionally, being responsive to improving preventive health programs and bolstering primary services are in keeping with today's healthcare trends and best practices.

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2. We support efforts to ensure adequate transportation to emergency services in Olympia Fields. We have heard on multiple occasions that the hospital system is developing transit plans to better accommodate community needs. Currently, the community views a lack of adequate transportation as an impediment to quality care.
3. We support redirecting capital gains obtained from eliminating current duplication of services into a system of home and community based services focused on prevention, primary care, coordinated discharges and robust home care coordination. This system would include community clinics treating medical and mental health issues. Although the Care-Link program is in place, the level of detailed services provided by Care-Link in the above areas are not well known to community partners and vendors that can be utilized to assist with providing these community based services to the hospital system.
4. We support repurposing the current Chicago Heights facility to be used by viable social service organizations that serve the Chicago Heights community. Ideally, we would like to see the facility include a think tank organization to identify and address the bio-psycho-social needs of the community and the development of a not-for-profit specifically developed to coordinate services and seek state, federal, and private funding to sustain the effort.
5. We support the not-for-profit organization being responsible for gathering statistics on the efficacy of the expanded home and community based services, as it relates to reducing avoidable hospitalization re-admissions and reducing overall emergency service utilization.
6. We support the development of a 12 bed short term/stabilization psychiatric unit to support the efforts of the new outpatient services facility located at Vollmer Road and Dixie Hwy.

The challenge of getting the community to see that current deployment of hospital services and resources are not sustainable going forward are worth the sizeable out-reach effort. The progress made by the hospital system in the last several years is reflective of solid management approaches to a grave financial problem that has to be addressed and improved. We believe that the St. James Health management team is proposing a thoughtful and compassionate plan for change that builds on current successes improving the health of the system and their community pledge of making Franciscan St. James Health one of the best hospital systems in Southland Chicago.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Genevieve Thomas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Genevieve Thomas
President