

**HIGHLAND
HEALTH CARE
CENTER**



January 31, 2018

Via Federal Express

Ms. Kathryn J. Olson
Chair
Illinois Health Facilities and
Services Review Board
525 West Jefferson Street, 2nd Floor
Springfield, Illinois 62761

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**HEALTH FACILITIES &
SERVICES REVIEW BOARD**

Re: Northgrove Dialysis (Proj.No.17-049)

Dear Ms. Olson:

I am the administrator of Highland Health Care Center, a comprehensive skilled nursing center located in Highland, Illinois. On behalf of Highland Health Care Center, I write in support of DaVita's proposal to establish Northgrove Dialysis - a much needed health service in Highland.

At Highland Health Care Center, we provide short term rehabilitation therapy, long term care, and hospice and stroke rehabilitation services. We are a high acuity center and are proud to accept Medicare and Medicaid, in addition to many private secondary insurance plans. As a result, we often treat many elderly individuals suffering from chronic diseases, such as chronic kidney disease. Many such patients require dialysis three times per week, in addition to rehabilitation or other services at our Center.

We transport residents who suffer from kidney failure to their dialysis appointments. Highland does not have a dialysis clinic, and we currently transport the majority of these patients to facilities that are nearly 30 minutes away (or an hour round-trip) from our center - made three times per week per patient. This is costly for our center. Further, for our many short-term rehabilitation residents, the transportation time alone can cause them to miss therapy or other treatments that are necessary for their rehabilitation goals. We also worry about residents' ability to make this trip on their own once discharged from our Center, particularly in the winter months or when the patients do not drive and must rely on friends or family members for transportation.

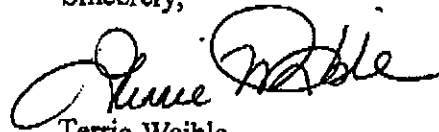
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Furthermore, we are facing new concerns about the availability of dialysis stations in surrounding towns. Facilities in Maryville and Edwardsville are the closest to the site of the proposed Northgrove; however these centers are heavily utilized. As of December 31, 2017, the Edwardsville Dialysis facility was at 77.1% utilization and the Maryville facility was at 73.8% utilization. The centers therefore have limited windows of availability for dialysis treatments, which can require us to make multiple trips when our residents are unable to schedule overlapping appointment times. We can generally be flexible, but we hear from our patients that reduced availability is harder for others who need to schedule their dialysis around work schedules or other commitments held by them or their sources of transportation.

We understand that one physician estimates that 65 of his patients that reside in Highland will require dialysis in the next two years. We support the establishment of Northgrove Dialysis so these new dialysis patients may choose a facility that is most convenient to them. Highland Health Care Center is committed to the health of our patients, and we will continue to transport patients to the dialysis facilities of their choice. We know firsthand that many of these new dialysis patients will choose to dialyze in their own community, and that Highland Health Care Center will benefit from shorter patient transports and more time to help our patients rehabilitate and return home.

Highland Health Care Center fully supports the proposed Northgrove Dialysis to improve health care access for our aging population. We respectfully request that the Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board approve the application for Northgrove Dialysis.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terrie Weible". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "W".

Terrie Weible
Administrator
Highland Health Care Center