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Transcript of Public Hearing

Date: March 11, 2019

Case: State of Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board

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1 ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
2 HEALTH FACILITIES AND SERVICES REVIEW BOARD
3 BEFORE HEARING OFFICER JEANNIE MITCHELL
4

5 IN RE:

6 Public Comments Regarding

7 Westlake Hospital

Exemption No. E-004-19

8
9 HEARING in accordance with the requirements of the
10 Illinois Health Facilities Planning Act
11

12 March 11, 2019

13 Bulger Park Community Center

14 1601 Hirsch Street

15 Melrose Park, Illinois 60160
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22 Job No.: 234196

23 Pages: 1 - 184

24 Transcribed by: Bobbi J. Fisher, RPR

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PRESENT:

ILLINOIS HEALTH FACILITIES AND SERVICES
REVIEW BOARD, by
JEANNIE MITCHELL, Public Hearing Officer
ANN GUILD, Compliance Manager
Second Floor
525 West Jefferson Street
Springfield, Illinois 62761
(217) 782-3516

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P R O C E E D I N G S

HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Hello? Good afternoon. Good afternoon. If I could have everyone's attention, we're about to begin. Please take your seats. Good afternoon. Thank you for participating in today's public hearing for Westlake Hospital, Exemption No. E-004-19. I am Jeannie Mitchell, general counsel and today's hearing officer for the Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board.

Present with me today are Courtney Avery, the administrator, and Ann Guild, the compliance analyst. On behalf of HFSRB, thank you for attending today's hearing. As per the rules of the Illinois Health Planning Act, the previously published legal notice has been submitted to the court reporter and will be included in today's record.

* * *

LEGAL NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
AND OPPORTUNITY FOR WRITTEN COMMENT

In accordance with the requirements of the Illinois Health Facilities Planning Act and 77 Illinois Adm. Code Part 1130, Notice is given of a

1 Public Hearing on an application for exemption for
2 the discontinuation of an acute care hospital from
3 Pipeline-Westlake Hospital d/b/a Westlake Hospital
4 and SRC Hospital Investments II, LLC. The
5 Applicants propose to discontinue a 230-bed acute
6 care hospital, Westlake Hospital, located at 1225
7 Westlake, Melrose Park, Illinois.

8 The Public Hearing will be conducted by
9 the Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review
10 Board pursuant to the Illinois Health Facilities
11 Planning Act. The Public Hearing is open to the
12 public and will afford an opportunity for parties
13 at interest to present written and/or verbal
14 comment relevant to the project. All allegations
15 or assertions should be relevant to the need for
16 the proposed project and be supported with two
17 copies of documentation or materials that are
18 preferably printed or typed on paper size 8 1/2" by
19 11".

20 The Hearing will be held on Monday, March
21 11, 2019, at the Bulger Park Community Center, 1601
22 Hirsch Street, Melrose Park, Illinois 60160.
23 Public sign-in will begin at 1:00 p.m.; the public
24 hearing will take place from 2:00 p.m. through 8:00

1 p.m.

2 For additional information, call (217)
3 782-3516 (TTY # 800-547-0466 for hearing impaired
4 only).

5 NOTICE: THIS MEETING WILL BE ACCESSIBLE
6 TO PERSONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN COMPLIANCE WITH
7 PERTINENT STATE AND FEDERAL LAWS UPON NOTIFICATION
8 OF ANTICIPATED ATTENDANCE. PERSONS WITH SPECIAL
9 NEEDS SHOULD CONTACT COURTNEY AVERY AT THE HEALTH
10 FACILITIES PLANNING BOARD OFFICE BY TELEPHONE AT
11 (217) 782-3516 (TTY # 800-547-0466 FOR HEARING
12 IMPAIRED ONLY) OR BY LETTER NO LATER THAN MARCH 8,
13 2019.

14 * * *

15 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Please note
16 that in order to ensure the Health Facility and
17 Services Review Board's public hearings to protect
18 the privacy and maintain the confidentiality of an
19 individual's health information, covered entities,
20 as defined by the Health Insurance Portability and
21 Accountability Act of 1996, such as hospital
22 providers, health plans, and health care
23 clearinghouses, submitting oral or written
24 testimony that disclose protected health

1 information of individuals shall have a valid
2 written authorization from that individual. The
3 authorization shall allow the covered entity to
4 share the individual's protected health information
5 at this hearing.

6 Those of you that have prepared text of
7 your testimony, please note that you may submit the
8 written text, which will be entered into today's
9 record and made available for all HFSRB members
10 prior to the project's consideration.

11 For those of you providing oral
12 testimony, I ask that you limit your testimony to
13 three minutes. I'm not going to time you today.
14 We have sufficient time; we're here until 8:00.
15 But just be respectful of everybody's time. You
16 know, if you're going on for 10 or 15 minutes, I'm
17 going to have to cut you off.

18 As you approach the speaker's podium,
19 please provide me with your sign-in sheet. Prior
20 to beginning your remarks, clearly state and spell
21 your full name, and that's for the benefit of the
22 court reporter, so it's important that you remember
23 to do that. If you have written copies of your
24 remarks, please provide those to me. If you have

1 not signed in yet, please see Courtney Avery and
2 Ann Guild in the back of the room.

3 And if, during the course of this public
4 hearing, you sign in for appearance only and you
5 change your mind and you want to speak, you can do
6 that. Just go back to the back of the room and
7 sign the pink sheet to speak.

8 And there was a comment made that there
9 were some confusion about the options at the bottom
10 of the sheet for support or oppose. I want to be
11 clear: Support means that you support the closure
12 of the hospital. Opposed means that you oppose the
13 closure of the hospital. So if you made a mistake
14 before and you want to go back and change your
15 position, feel free to do so.

16 Are there any questions regarding these
17 instructions? Hearing none, today's proceedings
18 will begin with a representative from Westlake
19 Hospital.

20 MR. OTTOLINO: Good afternoon.

21 VARIOUS: Good afternoon.

22 MR. OTTOLINO: I'm Joseph Ottolino, the
23 CEO of Westlake Hospital and West Suburban Medical
24 Center. J-o-s-e-p-h --

1 VARIOUS: Can't hear.

2 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Can't hear you.

3 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Feel free to
4 take the mic off the --

5 MR. OTTOLINO: How about now?

6 VARIOUS: Yes.

7 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: There you go.

8 MR. OTTOLINO: Last name is Ottolino,
9 O-t-t-o-l-i-n-o.

10 Nearly a hundred years ago, the current
11 building that houses Westlake Hospital was opened.
12 Since then, medical --

13 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Put the mic closer.

14 MR. OTTOLINO: -- communities
15 understanding the human body advanced in science
16 had led to the world that we know today. We now
17 manage diseases once being (indiscernible),
18 surgeons who transplant organs and (indiscernible)
19 individuals now have.

20 Just as well (indiscernible) hospital has
21 changed with doctors, nurses providing care has
22 also changed. Because of this, hospitals do not
23 serve the same role they once did. Visits are
24 fewer, length of stay got shorter, and more and

1 more outpatient and ambulatory care facilities are
2 producing better outcomes for patients.

3 As the health facility board members have
4 no doubt seen, the Affordable Care Act, medicaid
5 care, and private payers have brought massive
6 changes to our healthcare system here in Illinois
7 and across the country. The entire healthcare
8 system is being reorganized, taking patients out of
9 the hospitals. For example, over the last few
10 decades, we have seen the length of stay of
11 patients go from nine days to now just six.

12 At Westlake, there are fewer overall
13 in-patients. Last year, we had 4,100 out --
14 in-patient visits down from 4,800 just two years
15 ago. With these numbers, it was no surprise
16 Westlake's market share is among the lowest in the
17 area. These trends, coupled with undercompensated,
18 uncompensated PR from medicaid, medicare, and
19 uninsured patients create a financial strain for
20 many of the hospitals, including Westlake. This
21 reason as a whole -- and access to hospital beds.

22 The area that Westlake served has in
23 excess of 473 accessive beds and clinical,
24 surgical, and pediatric beds, according to the

1 inventory of healthcare facilities and services.
2 Additionally, significant changes in Illinois
3 General Assembly made in 2018, the Illinois
4 Hospital Assessment Payment and Charity Care Act
5 Credit Program are anticipating results in Westlake
6 receiving \$4 million less this year in state
7 funding.

8 In 2018, operating losses for Westlake
9 Hospital exceeded \$14 million and are projected to
10 grow. This is on top of the hospital's operating
11 at a significant loss at least since 2015. Worse,
12 these losses prevent financial resources from being
13 used where the greatest health care impact can be
14 had. Simply put, every day here is \$28 on empty
15 beds in the hospital instead of on our patients.

16 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Mic.

17 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: We cannot hear you at
18 all.

19 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: We can't hear anything.

20 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Sir, we cannot hear
21 you, a word you're saying.

22 MR. OTTOLINO: Our request to the board
23 is simple. Allow Pipeline to serve this region's
24 patients needs in a proven way that results in high

1 quality and cost effective care. Our proposals to
2 Westlake is not to (indiscernible) the quality of
3 care that the nurses and doctors provide them. The
4 work they do is remarkable and humbling. Our
5 proposal is about modernizing where and how
6 to (indiscernible) --

7 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Sir, we cannot hear you
8 back here.

9 MR. OTTOLINO: We must also invent the
10 services that Westlake (indiscernible) offering
11 (indiscernible) programs. Westlake Hospital is not
12 a trauma center --

13 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Can somebody help him
14 with the mic?

15 MR. OTTOLINO: -- and is not a safety net
16 hospital.

17 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: I can't hear a word
18 he's saying.

19 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Is that recorder hooked
20 up to the mic?

21 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Jeannie, they're
22 correcting the mic issues now.

23 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Okay.

24 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: There are two mics

1 going, and they seem to be crossing one another.

2 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Okay.

3 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: So they're
4 straightening out the technical difficulties now.

5 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Okay.

6 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: I apologize for
7 interrupting.

8 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: If everybody
9 didn't -- can you hear me? This doesn't make a
10 difference. I'll shout.

11 We're having some technical difficulties.
12 We're trying to get it resolved. And so we'll
13 continue once we get it resolved.

14 (A brief recess was taken.)

15 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: I think we got
16 the issue resolved. If I can ask everyone just to
17 please be respectful of everyone that comes here
18 and speaks. This is not a question-and-answer
19 format. Please don't shout at any of the speakers.
20 Just be respectful of everyone so we can make sure
21 we proceed properly. Thank you.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You're welcome.

23 MR. OTTOLINO: Good afternoon, everybody.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Good afternoon.

1 MR. OTTOLINO: Try this one more time.
2 So I'll start from the beginning because,
3 obviously, some people in the back or in the front
4 didn't hear me.

5 So good afternoon. I'm Joseph Ottolino.
6 I'm the CEO of Westlake Hospital as well as the CEO
7 of West Suburban Medical Center.

8 Nearly a hundred years ago, the current
9 building that houses Westlake Hospital opened.
10 Since then, medical communities understanding the
11 human body and advances in science have led to what
12 we know to this hospital today. We now manage
13 diseases once deemed death sentences, surgeons
14 routinely transplant organs, and (indiscernible)
15 individuals now here.

16 Just as what (indiscernible) hospital has
17 changed, the way doctors and nurses provide care
18 has also changed. Because of this, hospitals do
19 not take the same role they once did. Visits are
20 fewer, length of stay got shorter, outpatient and
21 ambulatory care facilities are producing better
22 outcomes for our patients.

23 As the health facility board member has
24 no doubt seen, the Affordable Care Act, medicaid

1 managed care, and private payers have brought
2 massive changes to our healthcare system here in
3 Illinois and across the country. Their entire
4 healthcare system is being reorganized to keep
5 patients outside of hospitals. For example, over
6 the last three decades, we have seen patients'
7 length of stay go from nine days to less than six.

8 At Westlake, there are fewer overall
9 in-patient visits, dropping just to 4,100 last year
10 down from 4,800 two years ago. With these numbers,
11 like last, there's no surprise Westlake's market
12 share is among a lowest in the community, in our
13 service area. These trends, coupled with
14 undercompensated or uncompensated care from
15 medicaid, medicare, and uninsured patients create
16 financial strain for many of the hospitals,
17 including Westlake.

18 This region as a whole has access to
19 hospital beds. The area that Westlake serves has
20 in excess of 473 medical, surgical, pediatric beds,
21 according to the inventory of healthcare facilities
22 and services.

23 Additionally, significant changes that
24 the Illinois General Assembly made in 2018 to

1 Illinois Hospital assessment payment and charity
2 care tax credit program are anticipated to result
3 in Westlake receiving \$4 million less per year in
4 state funding. In 2018, operating losses at
5 Westlake exceeded 14 million in our projected
6 growth. This is on top of the hospital's operating
7 at a significant loss since at least 2015. Worse,
8 these losses prevent our financial resources from
9 being used and the greatest care can be had.

10 Simply put, every day, we are spending
11 dollars on empty hospital beds instead of patients.
12 Our request to the board is simple: Allow Pipeline
13 to serve this region's patients' needs in a proven
14 way that results in high-quality and cost-effective
15 care.

16 Our proposal to close Westlake is not due
17 to the quality of care that the nurses and doctors
18 provide. The work they do is truly remarkable and
19 humbling. Our proposal is to modernize where and
20 how that care is provided. We must also invest in
21 services that Westlake does not offer. It does not
22 have an extensive program, since Westlake Hospital
23 is not a trauma center nor is it a safety net
24 hospital.

1 As my colleagues will discuss, pipeline
2 will invest in PCC community wellness center,
3 authority qualified healthcare center located on
4 the campus of Westlake and Noah's Ark (ph). PCC
5 will help meet the needs of our patients in this
6 region, including prenatal and behavior health
7 services.

8 You'll hear emotional testimony today,
9 and we understand that. Nothing is more personal
10 than healthcare. For decades, hospitals were
11 anchors of the community. What we're here to say
12 is that we're committed to investing in the right
13 mix of ambulatory and outpatient care for the
14 people of Melrose Park and reinvest in West
15 Suburban Medical Center for the region's healthcare
16 needs.

17 With this consolidation and reinvestment,
18 we'll continue to serve diverse communities not
19 only in the western suburbs but Chicago and the
20 area, but also diverse communities of the west side
21 of Chicago, where West Suburban Medical Center
22 draws the majority of its patients from.

23 We look forward to working with the
24 board, local leaders, and residents. Thank you.

1 VARIOUS: Boo.

2 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Again, I ask
3 that we please remain respectful.

4 Please come up, No. 1.

5 MS. VINES: Good afternoon. My name is
6 Debra Vines. I'm the CEO of The Answer,
7 Incorporated, autism awareness and support agency,
8 and I'm also the mom of a 31-year-old impacted by
9 autism.

10 First, I want to speak to being a mom.
11 My son is 31 years old, and he's been seeing a
12 primary physician here at Westlake Hospital for the
13 last eight years. Autism impacts one in 48
14 individuals to date.

15 Persons with autism are very systematic.
16 Everything has to be the same. If I change Dejon's
17 (ph) doctor right now, it's going to be an issue.
18 It's really going to be an issue, and that's just
19 speaking to me as a parent.

20 My agency services about 700 individuals
21 in Proviso Township. In this area, a lot of
22 individuals would be impacted. Persons impacted by
23 autism, cerebral palsy, Down's syndrome, and other
24 developmental disabilities as well. With having

1 developmental disabilities, they have to see
2 psychiatrists for their behavior issues and
3 neurologists for their medication.

4 If Westlake Hospital closes, this
5 population of individuals would be terribly
6 demised. So I ask the individuals that are over
7 the vote for this hospital to please stay open.
8 Thank you.

9 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Thank you.

10 No. 2?

11 UNKNOWN INDIVIDUAL: Ma'am, may I have
12 your pink sheet? Ma'am, may I have your pink
13 sheet?

14 DR. KUSHNER: Good afternoon. I'm
15 Dr. Glenn Kushner, the current president of the
16 medical staff of Westlake Hospital. As I stand
17 here shoulder --

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Your mic went out.

19 DR. KUSHNER: Mic went out.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: There you go.

21 Stay close to it.

22 DR. KUSHNER: As I stand here shoulder to
23 shoulder with Mayor Ron Serpico, State
24 representatives Chris Welch and Kathleen Willis,

1 members of PASOS, colleagues from Westlake
2 Hospital, friends, and members of the community, I
3 feel enough warmth to melt the snow and envelope me
4 with love and encouragement. My wife and I have
5 stood in the snow with many doctors and the same
6 group of people two weeks ago. She and I attended
7 a legislative meeting downtown. We have spoken
8 with many fellow physicians over the recent weeks
9 and many nurses and staff as well. So many people
10 want to speak but cannot. So many want to march
11 but they cannot.

12 And so I come here today to speak on
13 their behalf to say what's in their hearts, to cry
14 for them, to cry with them, and to plead the case
15 to you of the fraud and abuse of Pipeline has
16 delivered upon our hospital and this community.

17 I come to you today with a heavy heart
18 but yet a ray of hope. Hope is so important to us
19 humans. When I talk to patients where I must give
20 a terminal diagnosis, I always try to leave them
21 with hope. I come to speak to you and I leave you
22 with a sincere hope that the Illinois Health
23 Facilities and Review Board will listen and give
24 credence to the communities' cries for help.

1 Pipeline initially said all the right
2 things, made all the right promises to get the
3 right to purchase Westlake Hospital, but I'd like
4 to point out the inconsistencies of Pipeline safety
5 net impact statement. Discontinuation of services
6 of Westlake Hospital will have an adverse impact on
7 essential safety net services to the community.
8 Westlake takes many referrals from outside area
9 hospitals without psych units. Closing Westlake
10 will adversely impact the ability of another
11 healthcare system to cross-subsidize safety net
12 services specifically for in-patient treatment of
13 psychiatry services, since we serve public aid
14 patients that cannot access free-standing psych
15 facilities in the State of Illinois.

16 Additionally, Westlake is the only
17 in-patient program offering methadone to detox
18 patients off of opioids, which are contributing to
19 many deaths across this nation. We take referrals
20 from Gottlieb Hospital close in the area because
21 they only have an 11-bed geri psych unit. Patients
22 who run out of their lifetime medicare days become
23 medicaid to the hospital, are provided services at
24 Westlake.

1 Westlake also provides electrocompulsive
2 therapy services for severely depressed
3 individuals, not provided by any hospital close to
4 the area. In response to Pipeline's safety net
5 impact statement, there was no longer over-bedding
6 in the area of OB/GYN services since the recent
7 closure of Gottlieb Hospital's maternity services.

8 Also, Westlake Hospital is a
9 stroke-certified hospital and its loss will
10 directly impact the community within minutes
11 mattering in the treatment of an acute stroke. We
12 want this board to please forward this valid case
13 to the State's Attorney General's Office, to Kwame
14 Raoul. We are pleading for truth. We are pleading
15 for justice for not only our hospital but for this
16 community.

17 I hear that Pipeline says it has plans to
18 invest in building. It shouldn't. You invest in
19 people, not buildings. That's great because they
20 can start by investing in the hard-working 700-plus
21 employees of Westlake by not firing them. Westlake
22 Hospital is not made of just bricks and mortar. It
23 is made of hard-working people, dedicated nurses
24 and doctors. Pipeline can invest in the people of

1 Melrose Park by not taking away their hospital,
2 their emergency room, their psych unit, their
3 OB/GYN services -- maternity in particular -- as
4 well as our pediatrics and their ability to get
5 services for ETTs, ECTs, and expedient treatments
6 for things like strokes.

7 Please bear in mind, Melrose Park is not
8 a rich community. It is filled with families
9 struggling to make it through life without much
10 money: The poor, the brown, the blacks, people who
11 need our help, our brothers, our sisters. The last
12 time I looked, we all had the same color hearts and
13 the same color blood. These people are the ones
14 most afflicted by psychiatric issues such as
15 depression and despair, drugs and alcoholism. They
16 need our psychiatric unit.

17 The women of child-bearing age who need a
18 hospital in the area for regular OB/GYN check-ups,
19 mammograms, which Westlake has given free for many
20 years, and the excellent maternity service,
21 especially our new 16-bed unit which Westlake has
22 provided for for many years.

23 The community needs this hospital to
24 service those families living in the area, many who

1 are within walking distance for their visits,
2 encouraging good prenatal care and pediatric
3 service close by, and those older patients living
4 in the area who is not afford transportation to
5 other hospitals, further away for their general
6 care such as for strokes, chest pain,
7 gastroenterology and surgeries.

8 The waiting time for emergency transport
9 to a hospital not close by will increase
10 exponentially, contributing to future deaths. I
11 have a letter from John Simon, which I handed in,
12 the EMS coordinator for Melrose Park Fire
13 Department substantiating this fact.

14 In summary, we will stand together for
15 change, to be uplifted in solidarity for a common
16 cause and to fight bigotry and injustice to fight
17 to keep Westlake open, to make it better for the
18 community, and to continue to serve the underserved
19 who so desperately need our help.

20 Westlake Hospital is so much more than a
21 hospital. It is one of the pillars of this
22 community. It is the beacon of hope and service to
23 the community, providing over 700 jobs to people,
24 many living in this area. We are pleading with

1 you, members of the Illinois Health Facilities and
2 Review Board. You are our ray of hope. We are
3 looking to you to lead us, to carry the torch to
4 the State's Attorney General, to not approve this
5 closure by Pipeline, and to review Pipeline's
6 safety net impact statement for accuracy in view of
7 the aforementioned evidence. Thank you.

8 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: No. 3? No. 3?

9 Please remember to give me your pink
10 sheet as you come up.

11 DR. McDONALD: Hello.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Hi.

13 DR. McDONALD: Is it working now?

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

15 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Please state
16 and spell your name.

17 DR. McDONALD: I'm Raymond J. McDonald.
18 M-c-D-o-n-a-l-d, like the hamburger.

19 I'm -- I have been on -- I'm Raymond
20 McDonald. I've been a physician at Westlake
21 Hospital for 45 years. I know I don't look that
22 old, but I have been there for 45 years. I was the
23 director of the emergency room for at least 15
24 years, and then I had a private practice for 25

1 years --

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It went off again.

3 DR. McDONALD: It went off again.

4 Anyway, I have been here a long time.

5 Currently, I was -- in the past, I was a
6 medical director of the Baptist retirement home in
7 Maywood, which unfortunately closed. I have been
8 at Oak Ridge Nursing Home in Hillside for 31 years,
9 and currently, I'm the medical director of
10 developmental center, formerly Aspire, for 42
11 years.

12 And the point I'm trying to make is
13 Bellwood is a place that has Down's syndrome
14 patients, cerebral palsy patients. All of them are
15 mentally challenged. And that place really needs
16 Westlake Hospital.

17 I have about 80 developmentally delayed
18 patients in Bellwood. These patients suffer
19 predominantly from Down's syndrome, cerebral palsy,
20 autism, and all are severely challenged. They're
21 all aging in place now, and they have become
22 typical nursing home patients. Westlake Hospital
23 has done a terrific job over the past 42 years,
24 handling the very difficult and complicated

1 patients. Most cannot communicate with us and so
2 their problems become even more challenging.

3 I have admitted these patients to other
4 hospitals. They've been (indiscernible) staff and
5 Gottlieb staff, and nowhere near have we had such
6 favorable results than what we achieved at Westlake
7 Hospital.

8 The staff works like a family, with very
9 sincere and dedicated nurses and physicians and all
10 are helping and involved in caring -- and the
11 administration has always been pretty awesome, very
12 helpful, until just recently, unfortunately.

13 At other hospitals, it's difficult to
14 find specialists who want to be involved with these
15 challenging patients. In addition, the financial
16 remuneration is low for these patients. Hence, I
17 fear they will not be adequately cared for if
18 Westlake Hospital closes.

19 Another point I just remembered: One of
20 my ophthalmologist friends was telling me that she
21 had a patient that was at Elmhurst Hospital just
22 the other day, and all of a sudden, her insurance
23 wasn't covered by the hospital, and she came over
24 to Westlake to be treated and was treated and had

1 her operation.

2 So a lot of these new insurance policies
3 aren't what you think they are, and a lot of the
4 fancy hospitals don't want to take those insurance
5 policies. So that's another thing to really keep
6 in mind. (Indiscernible), all these different
7 names with the other hospitals.

8 I want to make one last point. I was
9 around when Westlake was first sold to Resurrection
10 Healthcare for \$70 million. That's a lot of money
11 back then. That was 20 years ago. Currently, the
12 new owner of Westlake paid \$70 million, in today's
13 dollars, which is about 35 million, for Westlake
14 Hospital, Weiss Hospital, West Suburban Hospital,
15 as well as the River Forest Medical Center, which
16 is quite nice, by the way.

17 I think to replace those four functioning
18 healthcare institutions, it would cost at least a
19 billion dollars. At a least a billion. Maybe two
20 billion.

21 As I said, the current owners purchased
22 all four of them for approximately 70 million.
23 They paid seven cents on the dollar for
24 irreplaceable facilities that I think should never

1 have been sold to the private sector in the first
2 place.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

4 DR. McDONALD: I hope in the future that
5 the State of Illinois does not allow transfer of
6 any strategic, valuable public properties to the
7 private sector, thus these facilities disappear
8 forever, they are no longer available to future
9 generations. Thank you.

10 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: No. 4?

11 DR. SCHARG: Hello.

12 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Please state
13 and spell your name.

14 DR. SCHARG: My name is Ari Scharg.
15 A-r-i, S-c-h-a-r-g.

16 I'm proud to serve as special counsel to
17 the Village of Melrose Park on this Westlake
18 matter. I want everybody in the room to know, as
19 well as the board, that, last week, the Village of
20 Melrose Park filed a lawsuit against Westlake --
21 excuse me, against Pipeline alleging fraud and
22 civil conspiracy for making false and deceptive
23 statements in connection with their purchase of
24 Westlake Hospital.

1 Those misrepresentations and false
2 statements were made through their change of
3 ownership and discontinuance applications that they
4 submitted to this board. The board will hear
5 testimony today from a number of people that have
6 been impacted and about how closing Westlake will
7 impact the community and the thousands of socially
8 and medically vulnerable patients that will lose
9 access to critical healthcare because Westlake
10 Hospital is their safety net.

11 None of this is new to Pipeline. Its
12 owners knew that their plans to close Westlake
13 could be met with resistance from the community and
14 the board, and so Pipeline, an out-of-state private
15 equity fund, decided that it would be better to lie
16 for the benefit of its investors than to be
17 truthful and risk the board finding that Westlake
18 is what we already know: A critically vital
19 community hospital -- can you hear me? -- a
20 critically vital community hospital that cannot be
21 sold to a buyer, that will shut it down as quickly
22 as possible.

23 For the board's benefit and for the
24 community's benefit, I want to identify the

1 specific misrepresentations that my client made
2 when they applied to the board to purchase the
3 hospital. On September 6, 2018, Pipeline submitted
4 a change of ownership exemption application to
5 avoid any interference from the board or from the
6 village or from members of the public that would
7 request a hearing just like this.

8 Pipeline's application made the following
9 representations: No. 1, quote, "Following the
10 transaction, Westlake will continue to operate for
11 the benefit of the residents of Chicago and the
12 Greater Chicago area, including serving poor and
13 underserved individuals through Westlake's
14 charitable activities."

15 No. 2, quote, "The transaction set forth
16 in this application will result in no changes to
17 the scope of services offered at Westlake."

18 No. 3, "Following the transaction,
19 Pipeline will 'be adopting a charity care policy at
20 Westlake' that is identical to the charity care
21 policy already in place."

22 No. 4, "Pipeline 's 'charity care policy'
23 is not more restrictive than the current charity
24 care policies at Westlake."

1 And No. 5, "Pipeline's 'charity care
2 policy' will remain in place for no less than two
3 years following the purchase of the hospital."

4 Though these representations were all
5 false, Pipeline said what it had to say to get an
6 exemption -- can you hear me? Pipeline -- Pipeline
7 said what it had to say to get an exemption from
8 the board. Under the 2015 amendments to the Health
9 Facility Planning Act, the board was required to
10 approve it and had no discretion to reject it. The
11 sale was then completed on January 29th, 2019. A
12 few weeks later, Pipeline filed an application for
13 discontinuance to close Westlake as soon as
14 possible.

15 You would expect Pipeline to come up with
16 some reason to explain why it must all of a sudden
17 close Westlake, but its application for
18 discontinuance doesn't even pretend that there's
19 been a change of circumstances. In the few weeks
20 between the time it purchased the hospital on
21 January 29th and the time it filed its application
22 to close it on February 21st, instead, Pipeline
23 says it must, all of a sudden, shut down the
24 hospital for things it's known about all along,

1 such as:

2 1. The increased costs due to a, quote,
3 "broad national trend over the past 20 years of
4 moving away from inpatient care toward outpatient
5 and ambulatory care";

6 2. That Westlake has operated at a
7 significant loss since at least 2015; and,

8 3. As you have heard again this
9 afternoon, that Westlake incurred net operating
10 losses of \$14 million in 2018.

11 But they knew all of that before they
12 purchased the hospital. All of Pipeline's excuses
13 are based on information it had before it
14 consummated the agreement to purchase the hospital
15 on January 29th, 2019. This shows that Pipeline's
16 earlier representations about providing charity
17 care for two years and keeping the hospital open
18 for the benefit of the community were false and
19 they were deceptive. Don't go out -- let me know.
20 They were deceptive at the time that they were
21 made.

22 The result: A rich private equity
23 company makes money for its investors by flipping
24 their newest real estate asset while the Melrose

1 Park community loses the critically vital safety
2 net hospital that served tens of thousands of
3 socially and medically vulnerable patients every
4 year.

5 This is not the right outcome, obviously.
6 Nobody should be allowed to defraud a community in
7 the way that Pipeline has here. Even my
8 four-year-old daughter understands that we can't
9 let Pipeline get away with this.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I agree with her
11 100 percent.

12 DR. SCHARG: When I explained the
13 situation to her, she said, quote, that "we need to
14 capture them so they can't take the hospital away
15 from sick people," end quote. We can't do that.
16 But the board has broad powers to address the
17 terrible situation.

18 So what can the board do? Under 20 ILCS
19 3960/14.1, the board may deny or revoke any
20 application that violates any provision of the
21 Illinois Health Facilities Planning Act. Pipeline
22 undisputedly violated the two-year charity care
23 obligation under Section 8.5 of the act, even
24 though Pipeline provided a sworn certification,

1 affirming that they would, in fact, comply with
2 that requirement. On that basis, the board may
3 deny the current application for discontinuance and
4 revoke the change of ownership application that it
5 approved in October.

6 No. 2: The board can open up the
7 investigation pursuant to Section 1130.250 of the
8 Illinois Administrative Code, which specifically
9 states that false statements submitted to the board
10 will serve as a basis for an investigation into the
11 matter.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Repeat that.

13 DR. SCHARG: The board can open up an
14 investigation pursuant to Section 1130.250 of the
15 Illinois Administrative Code, which specifically
16 states that false statements submitted to the board
17 will serve as a basis for an investigation into the
18 matter.

19 Under Section 1130.250, the board can
20 require people who have made false statements to
21 appear before the board. That section also
22 provides the board with the power to censure the
23 people and determine that he or she is ineligible
24 to provide statements concerning any future board

1 considerations.

2 Now, these powers are particularly
3 helpful here where a Pipeline principal named
4 Nicholas Orozano signed and certified Pipeline's
5 application for a change of ownership exemption,
6 which affirmed that Pipeline would continue to
7 provide charity care for two years under Section
8 8.5 of the act and the same individual submitted
9 Pipeline's application for a discontinuance
10 exemption. On that basis, you may deny Pipeline's
11 discontinuance application.

12 And No. 4, Pipeline's pending application
13 for discontinuance is the subject of a lawsuit that
14 was filed by the Village of Melrose Park on March
15 7th in the Circuit Court of Cook County. Section
16 1130.560(b)(2) states that the board will defer
17 consideration of an application for exemption when
18 the application is the subject of litigation until
19 all litigation related to the application has been
20 completed.

21 The board must, therefore, stay
22 consideration of Pipeline's pending application for
23 discontinuance until a resolution of that
24 litigation.

1 To conclude, I want to say that the
2 Village of Melrose Park will never stop fighting to
3 save Westlake. Thank you.

4 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: I hope you
5 don't mind, but we're going to go out of order a
6 little bit. There are a few doctors here who have
7 closed their practice to attend today's hearing,
8 and so we're going to call them first before we
9 begin with No. 5.

10 So first up is No. 14. Please remember
11 to state and spell your first name.

12 DR. SALEH: Thank you, ma'am. My name is
13 Nabil, N-a-b-i-l, Saleh, S-a-l-e-h.

14 Good afternoon. Let me first say I'm so
15 proud that I belong to this community. It's a
16 community that I have been here working with for
17 the last -- since 1977. So it's almost about 40
18 years. I'm so proud to see all the people who take
19 care of the brown and black community, the
20 underdogs, the people who need the services most.
21 I'm so proud of the mayor, of Representative Willis
22 and Representative Welch, and all of you here, the
23 people who work at Westlake Hospital, whether they
24 are nurses, whether they are cleaners, whether they

1 are domestics, whether they are doctors. I'm so
2 proud to see so many of my colleagues here in this
3 place.

4 I'm not so sure -- thank you -- what is
5 to add after my colleague, Dr. Kushner, spoke so
6 eloquently and explained every point really that
7 concerns us as physicians. Westlake Hospital is a
8 hospital embedded in a community. Look around you.
9 You will see the homes of the people who live in
10 the community. People walk to Westlake Hospital.

11 I have been providing pediatric care in
12 this area for the last -- over 35, 40 years almost.
13 I care for the babies from birth until 21 years
14 old -- of age. Many times, we admit a sick newborn
15 baby, premature, to the special care unit at our
16 hospital, which is, by the way, is served by 24
17 hours a day obstetrics and gyne, 24 hours a day
18 anesthesia, 24 hours a day unit of services.

19 These are the babies who deserve our
20 attention and deserve every care we give them. Our
21 outcome has been excellent, but those babies need
22 the mothers. These mothers walk to the hospital
23 from the surrounding area. They walk three, four
24 blocks to the area, to the hospital to nurse their

1 babies, to hold their hands, to come to them and
2 provide the psychological comfort. Every mother
3 knows the nurses, and the nurses know every mother
4 that come, and the outcome is reflected on our
5 successful outcome of those babies.

6 Westlake Hospital is not just -- the
7 number of beds in any hospital, if we take the
8 statistics, nationally or locally, that does not
9 mean anything at all to all of us as individuals
10 here. We don't care how many hospital beds are
11 there in Illinois, but we care how many hospital
12 beds available for us as a community in Westlake,
13 particularly in certain areas like OB/GYN. What
14 are those mothers going to do? Where are they
15 going to go? What are they going to do when they
16 are in labor and they have to be transported so far
17 a distance? What happens if they deliver in a car?
18 What happens if they don't have a car? And many
19 times, many times life for those mothers and babies
20 is a matter of seconds or minutes. So we really
21 have to consider all that.

22 I feel in a way so sorry for my friend,
23 Joe Ottolino, the CEO of the hospital. He was also
24 working now for Pipeline, and he -- I'm sure Joe

1 understands how we, as physicians, are litigated.
2 There was a rumor that doctors at Westlake Hospital
3 do not want to work there. That is a fallacy.
4 That is not true. All my colleagues are very
5 dedicated. When I sit in the doctors' lounge and
6 talk with my colleagues, they express how proud are
7 they here. They feel that we are going to fight
8 for this community and for this underdog community
9 that is being targeted by a corporate entity coming
10 from outside of our state, to link with the
11 politically connected people -- politically
12 connected people -- in order to achieve their
13 profits. This is not fair.

14 We provide -- we provide mental health.
15 We provide (indiscernible). We provide
16 psychiatric. We take care of the newborns and the
17 prematures and the children who need me, as I have
18 patients who come to me on wheelchairs, on scooters
19 with mothers walking three, four blocks, but it's
20 much better than (indiscernible) and how are going
21 so far. They don't want to go. I have mothers in
22 my office crying, saying "What are we going to do?"
23 I have physicians, colleagues of mine, who have
24 been in this area for 30, 40 years. They say,

1 "Shall we just close and leave?" No, we are not
2 going to leave. We are going to stay and we are
3 going to serve this community to the end, and I'm
4 so proud (indiscernible).

5 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Please
6 remember to give me your pink sheet as you come up.
7 No. 28.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Did we jump? I
9 got 36.

10 DR. YUNEZ: Thank you. Thank you. Is
11 the mic okay now?

12 VARIOUS: Yes.

13 DR. YUNEZ: Thank you. Again, I am so
14 happy to be here today.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Your name?

16 DR. YUNEZ: 30 years --

17 VARIOUS: Name, name.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We need your name.

19 DR. YUNEZ: Oh, Samuel, S-a-m-u-e-l,
20 Yunez, Y-u-n-e-z. I currently hold the position of
21 chair of the Department of Family Practice at the
22 hospital. I have been at the hospital for 30
23 years. My family lives in this community. As a
24 matter of fact, my son lives down the street. He's

1 currently in training, and he's joining me -- and
2 he's joining me. He wants to work at Westlake. He
3 doesn't want to work any other place.

4 Why? Because I have shown him the
5 quality of care and how we deliver care at
6 Westlake.

7 I know Ari, thank you for your -- all the
8 information you provided today. Thank you, Glenn.
9 I'm just going to talk from my heart. You know,
10 I'm here to fight for the medical staff, the
11 nurses, and the patients, the community. You know,
12 we have had a lot of corporation -- three or four
13 now or four or five since I have been here. They
14 have come and go. Nobody was committed to the
15 community.

16 When Tenant was here, the previous owner,
17 we kept saying we're going to get a new owner,
18 we're going to fight, we're going to keep Westlake
19 working. And we -- and the problem is this
20 Pipeline never gave us a chance. They came, lied
21 to everybody, and closed the hospital -- they're
22 trying to close the hospital two weeks after they
23 acquired the hospital.

24 My biggest concern is that they tell

1 everybody that we don't want to work at the
2 hospital. That's a big lie. We all want to be
3 working at the hospital. The reason why the
4 hospital has stayed open all this time is because
5 of the nurses that work there, the doctors that
6 work there, and the support from the community.

7 They keep talking about PCC clinic, PCC
8 clinic. How many people here know what the PCC
9 clinic is? PCC provides care to a special
10 underserved patient population. We provide the
11 care to the general community, not just the
12 underserved. So I don't know how they're trying to
13 attempt to provide service to the entire community
14 through the PCC wellness clinic.

15 What are the patients going to do? Where
16 are they going to go? They're not going to be able
17 to access care with going to the bigger university
18 hospitals -- the one at West Suburban or go to
19 (indiscernible) on the west side. People want to
20 have care here in their own community. This is a
21 community hospital, and we want to keep it that
22 way.

23 Thank you, everybody, for supporting us.
24 Thank you.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Sir, you're A-1.
2 Keep it up. Don't need to close Westlake.

3 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: No. 27.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What kind of math
5 you got?

6 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: We're going
7 out of order for a little bit.

8 I'll take your pink sheet. Please state
9 and spell your name.

10 DR. GORDON: Hello.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Hello.

12 DR. GORDON: My name is Bradley Gordon.
13 I'm a psychiatrist at Westlake Hospital. I'd like
14 to start out by thanking Westlake Hospital, the
15 Village of Melrose Park for offering me the
16 pleasure and the privilege to practice psychiatry
17 at Westlake Hospital for the last 29 years.

18 The discontinuance of the in-patient
19 psychiatric services at Westlake will impact the
20 safety net services to the community. Mental
21 health care is ubiquitous to all facets of American
22 money. It relates to all races, religions, ages,
23 cultures, and socioeconomic factions. Westlake
24 Hospital has answered the need for services to its

1 community prodigiously for decades. Westlake has
2 had the big shoulders to provide services to a
3 broad population of patients. Westlake, a small
4 community hospital, has provided service to those
5 who have come from neighboring Chicago and
6 suburbs --

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: True.

8 DR. GORDON: -- and underserved Illinois
9 counties as far away as Little Egypt and to Rock
10 Island, Illinois. The hospital has lent support to
11 patients coming from our first responders, who have
12 intervened at venues such as O'Hara Airport to
13 9-1-1 calls from local stores to domiciles in
14 Bellwood, Northlake, Maywood, Melrose Park, River
15 Forest, Franklin Park, Elmwood Park, Westchester,
16 Oak Park, Schuler Park, Elmhurst, just to mention a
17 few.

18 We work with municipalities to decrease
19 the risk to inmates detained in our local
20 departments of correction. Westlake has absorbed
21 patients from outside medical facilities. One can
22 see the placement of Westlake Community Hospital
23 demonstrates that safety net services to this large
24 community cannot easily be, quote,

1 "cross-subsidized." I don't know what that
2 actually means, but it's -- I'm not sure how that's
3 being used, but it cannot be cross-subsidized on an
4 in-patient basis, thereby adversely impacting the
5 community.

6 In fact, Madden Hospital, the local state
7 hospital, frequently cannot accommodate the large
8 influx of patients which daily flood our mental
9 health care system and depend on Westlake emergency
10 room and in-patient units to house and treat the
11 state's underbedding problem, which reflects the
12 underbedding problem in our Western Suburban
13 community.

14 The Westlake Community Hospital mental
15 health facility has provided a broad range of
16 needed treatments for its patients. These
17 treatments include, and are not limited to,
18 in-patient drug treatment and detox, individual
19 therapy, group therapy, milieu therapy, and we also
20 provide ECT to the severely mentally ill when
21 indicated, a treatment modality, which is
22 frequently not provided at other centers.

23 Furthermore, Westlake provides medical
24 support for patients seeking mental health services

1 at Westlake and neighboring hospitals, such as
2 River Edge and Madden.

3 Westlake networks with other hospitals to
4 provide excellent services. It accepts patients
5 with a wide range of insurance coverage and payees
6 and those whose insurance may not be sufficient to
7 cover some or all of the patients' needs. It
8 provides these services with a committed nursing,
9 social work staff, board-certified physicians, and
10 in conjunction with the disciplines provided at
11 Westlake, including rehabilitation, OB/GYN,
12 medicine and surgery, and pediatrics.

13 Westlake Hospital communicates with other
14 hospitals in the medical community. Westlake
15 Hospital fosters social support to the community it
16 serves with education, activity, and fitness
17 programs all under one roof.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: True.

19 DR. GORDON: The emergency room provides,
20 when appropriate, triage to psychiatry as well as
21 providing primary care and triage to other
22 facilities, thereby helping patients and minimizing
23 the cost of healthcare in general. The hospital
24 has strategically placed for easy access where

1 services are not available elsewhere.

2 For example, there are no mental health
3 facilities to the west and north of Westlake for
4 miles, and it is a stretch for locals to seek
5 mental health care as far away as Loreda to the
6 east and MacNeal to the south. River Edge, which
7 is within five miles, does not accept medicaid
8 patients. And Gottlieb Hospital, which is somewhat
9 nearer, has a small gero psychiatric unit and does
10 not take our large population of patients.

11 In view of the above, a disruption of
12 services at Westlake, a pillar of the community,
13 will effect people who depend on Westlake for
14 patient care, providers and their families, and
15 commerce for the community. Thank you.

16 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: No. 29.

17 DR. WARD: Is this thing working okay?

18 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: You got to
19 talk really close to the microphone.

20 DR. WARD: Okay. Kathleen Ward, W-a-r-d,
21 physician at Westlake Hospital. My name is
22 Kathleen Ward. I'm a cardiologist, interventional
23 cardiologist, and internal medicine specialist, and
24 I have been at Westlake Hospital for about 18 years

1 now. I really can't add much more to my
2 colleagues' statements about how this hospital is
3 vital to the community and an integral part of the
4 hospital system.

5 I also want to reiterate that I think
6 that the way -- the entire way in this process of
7 acquisition was handled, I believe, is biased,
8 poorly researched, premeditated, and deceitful, and
9 I also implore the board to refer this to Kwame
10 Raoul for Attorney General investigation.

11 But what I want to do is make this a
12 little more personal. As a cardiovascular
13 specialist, I get upset about clots. Clots to the
14 arteries. And the arteries I'm concerned about are
15 the brain and the heart. I'm sure you guys have
16 heart or seen billboards with brain -- pardon me --
17 time equals brain or heart -- time equals muscle.
18 That means that when you -- that means that when
19 you have a blood clot, you have no oxygen to that
20 organ, the brain or the heart, and part of it dies.
21 It is imperative that you receive quick treatment,
22 otherwise, you can die or have irreparable damage.

23 Now, as a safety net impact safety, I
24 don't believe this was appropriately addressed. I

1 would like to first focus on the need for speed
2 with ischemic disease. First, with stroke.
3 Westlake Hospital is a stroke-accredited service
4 area. That means that we can diagnose and initiate
5 treatment quickly.

6 Now, statistics available from the
7 National Heart and Blood Institute from 2016 show
8 that the optimum time to give that clot-busting
9 medication that you guys have heard of called TPA
10 is ideally within four and a half hours of your
11 first symptom of stroke. Four and a half hours.
12 Those same statistics show that the majority of
13 Americans present to the emergency room four hours
14 into their stroke. That leaves us with 30 minutes,
15 guys, 30 minutes to get diagnosed, get the CT scan,
16 and get that TPA rolling in.

17 Now, Westlake Hospital is about four
18 miles from West Suburban. According to IDOT data
19 that I looked up from 2019, that is an 18- to
20 20-minute drive in, quote/unquote, light traffic.
21 To Gottlieb, it is a 15-minute drive in light
22 traffic. To Loyola, it is a 20-minute drive in
23 light traffic.

24 When have you seen light traffic around

1 here? I had an office on Lake Street, and
2 sometimes it takes me 45 minutes to get there. It
3 is insanity. That doesn't even take into account
4 hospital bypass, where different referring
5 hospitals can no longer accept patients because
6 they're overcrowded. These patients with stroke
7 will have to be rerouted elsewhere.

8 Also, we have train tracks here, and I
9 don't know if you have ever been caught by one of
10 the freight trains that divides Melrose Park from
11 Maywood, but that's a nightmare. And just crossing
12 over the overpass of the Eisenhower is insanity.

13 So if you have your mother, your father,
14 your brother, your sister having a stroke and they
15 tell you -- and you go, "Oh, my God, they have been
16 sick for a couple of hours already," you have got
17 30 minutes. I don't think you're going to be
18 pleased if they end up somewhere else 40 minutes
19 later, either dead or with a devastating
20 complication from stroke. Minutes make a
21 difference, guys.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

23 DR. WARD: Minutes make a difference.

24 You can either walk away able to talk or

1 you cannot talk, not eat, and have a tube hanging
2 out of your belly because minutes were wasted.
3 Similarly -- similarly, with heart attack, which
4 I'm a cardiologist, we have the same time frames,
5 the same windows. You have seen the catch phrase
6 "time equals muscle." If your heart is deprived of
7 oxygen, you go into heart failure. You wear
8 oxygen. You're full of fluid. You're in the
9 hospital all the time. Your life is hell. We want
10 to prevent that. Again, time is muscle. We cannot
11 waste time driving around.

12 And a third ischemic problem is sudden
13 cardiac death. You drop dead right here. We have
14 ten minutes to get you to a hospital. These time
15 frames are important.

16 One other point: Who is at risk? People
17 over 50. I looked up the demographics of Melrose
18 Park. According to the demographics online, there
19 is approximately 25,000 people in Melrose Park. 22
20 percent, 6,500 are over 50. They are the ones at
21 risk. And I didn't even look up Bellwood and
22 Westchester or anything else.

23 Why are we being asked to go backwards
24 when every medical organization is pushing us

1 forward to deliver faster, more efficient care?
2 Westlake Hospital is a safety net hospital. We are
3 essential, and we are needed for ischemic heart
4 disease. Please reference this to Kwame Raoul.
5 Thank you.

6 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: No. 39. Don't
7 forget to state and spell your name.

8 DR. TAYLOR: My name is Lyndon Taylor.
9 L-y-n-d-o-n, T-a-y-l-o-r.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Mic's not working.

11 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: You have to
12 get really close to the microphone. You might want
13 to take it off and hold it. You have to get really
14 close.

15 DR. TAYLOR: I'm an
16 obstetrician/gynecologist at Healthcare for Women,
17 and I'm speaking -- I was going to say in support
18 of Westlake Hospital, but it's the other way
19 around; right?

20 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Yes.

21 DR. TAYLOR: So I'm against this. I was
22 going to say I was going to speak in support of
23 Westlake Hospital, but anyway...

24 Westlake is a community hospital that

1 serves the black and brown impoverished community
2 with a high percentage of medicare and medicaid
3 patients, with high-risk medical conditions. 29
4 percent are Spanish-speaking.

5 I'm an OB/GYN on staff at Westlake
6 Hospital for 28 years. We provide a high-level of
7 care that many may not be aware of. In gynecology,
8 Westlake Hospital is one of the first hospitals in
9 Illinois to become a center of excellence in
10 minimally invasive gynecology. They don't have it
11 at Loyola. They don't have it at Gottlieb. They
12 don't have it at West Suburban Hospital. They
13 don't have it at Elmhurst Hospital. We are a
14 center of excellence.

15 The center of excellence in minimally
16 evasive gynecology, or COEMEG, is a designation
17 awarded to institutions that focus on high-quality
18 care, patient safety, and decreasing the overall
19 cost of patient treatment. It was a huge
20 accomplishment for Westlake Hospital and the
21 physicians who independently receive the COEMEG
22 designation to get this. We have been thoroughly
23 vetted in terms of the care and the quality of
24 services that we provide. Patients can rest

1 assured, because an independent review board
2 reviewed this to ensure quality and positive
3 outcomes. We are highly committed to the quality,
4 safety, and culture of our patient experience.

5 In obstetrics, over 90 percent of our
6 patients have medicaid, yet, we provide a level of
7 care not found in any hospital in our area. First,
8 all patients delivering at Westlake Hospital are
9 delivered by experienced private attendings, not
10 medical students or residents. Most of the
11 doctors, nurses, and ancillary staff are bilingual
12 to accommodate our Hispanic OB patients. Our
13 nurses are compassionate --

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: True.

15 DR. TAYLOR: -- and participate in
16 regular drills which help us to be prepared for
17 obstetrical emergencies. We have in-house 24/7
18 anesthesia coverage for epidurals during labor, in
19 case an emergency C section is needed. We have
20 in-house 24 /7 neonatology coverage from Murray
21 Children's Hospital with neonatologists. We have
22 in-house 24/7 OB/GYN hospital coverage. No other
23 hospital has -- West Suburban is covered by family
24 practice residents. We cover labor and delivery,

1 provided by board-certified OB/GYNs. We have
2 maternal fetal medicine backup from Rush 24/7.

3 Quality is expensive. Our patients are
4 high-risk. 700 to 900 women die in childbirth
5 every year in the United States. They die from
6 obstetrical emergencies, cardiovascular disease,
7 sepsis, hemorrhage, hypertension, and pulmonary
8 embolism. 60 percent of maternal deaths are
9 preventable. But seconds count.

10 Black mothers are three to four times
11 more likely to die than white mothers. You might
12 remember Serena Williams and her situation. She
13 had a C section, pulmonary emboli and hemorrhage.
14 All kinds of complications.

15 We are here today fighting to decrease
16 the morbidity and mortality of the most vulnerable
17 mothers and babies here in Illinois, by preserving
18 access to obstetrical care. Saving obstetrics at
19 Westlake Hospital will save mothers' and babies'
20 lives.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Good.

22 DR. TAYLOR: Hispanic mothers and illegal
23 immigrants have their own unique barriers to access
24 to care, such as language, transportation issues,

1 and financial issues. Westlake Community Hospital
2 welcomes Hispanic patients with respectful care.
3 Hispanic mothers feel comfortable at Westlake.

4 Half of the deliveries in Illinois are
5 medicaid patients. Medicaid payments to Westlake
6 Hospital and other hospitals don't even cover the
7 cost of care given. That is why more and more
8 hospitals simply close their obstetrical
9 departments. Oak Park Hospital, Gottlieb Hospital,
10 La Grange Hospital -- may not have known about
11 them -- have all closed OB in my service area
12 alone. More hospitals will close. Yet the State
13 of Illinois reimbursed Westlake Hospital on the
14 basis of the intensity of care that we provided for
15 their high-risk patients, the financial picture of
16 the hospital need reversed. This is not a Westlake
17 issue. This is not a state issue. This is a
18 national issue.

19 I believe it was Gandhi who said, "A
20 nation's greatness is measured by how it treats its
21 weakest members." Are we going to financially
22 support the girth of mothers in the State of
23 Illinois to prevent morbidity/mortality of our
24 mothers and babies? Or are we going to let

1 for-profit hospitals close obstetrical units or the
2 whole hospital to improve their bottom line?

3 If Westlake Hospital closes, there will
4 be a huge impact on the essential safety net
5 services in obstetrics. Without Westlake Hospital
6 and Melrose Park, we will become an obstetrical
7 desert. Without the professional office building,
8 OB doctors will have to relocate. Medicaid
9 patients will once again lose their doctor.

10 Remember, PCC sends their patients to
11 Westlake. Pipeline wants to bus mothers and babies
12 to West Suburban Hospital. Busing pregnant women
13 and their babies to Austin Avenue is not timely or
14 safe. To that answer, I say keep OB open. What do
15 you say?

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Keep it open!

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Keep OB open!

18 Keep OB open! Keep OB open! Keep OB open! Keep
19 OB open!

20 THE WITNESS: Keep Westlake open.

21 Thanks.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

23 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: No. 11?

24 DR. HARVEY: Good afternoon.

1 VARIOUS: Good afternoon.

2 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: State and
3 spell your name.

4 DR. HARVEY: State and spell my name,
5 yes, ma'am.

6 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Thank you.

7 DR. HARVEY: My name is Andre Harvey,
8 A-n-d-r-e, H-a-r-v-e-y, from the Village of
9 Melwood. And I am so sad that this day is even
10 here, that I'm here talking at this podium about
11 closing Westlake Hospital, a hospital that I've
12 learned as -- from when I've grown up here in the
13 Village of Melwood. I've been in the Village of
14 Melwood for over 50 years. I won't tell you how
15 old I really am, but I will tell you that Westlake
16 Hospital is part of my family.

17 I'm speaking as the mayor of Village of
18 Melwood but I'm also speaking as a fire fighter,
19 because I'm a fire fighter for over 26 years, and I
20 was an emergency medical technician and drove that
21 ambulance to Westlake each and every day. And,
22 currently, the Village of Melwood transports about
23 600 patients to Westlake on a daily basis -- on a
24 yearly basis. And that may not sound like a lot,

1 but it's twofold. Westlake Hospital is probably
2 about two minutes away by ambulance ride from the
3 Village of Melwood. Not only do we take patients
4 that want to go to Westlake Hospital and refuse to
5 go anywhere else because Westlake is part of our
6 community, but it also allows us to get our
7 paramedics back in service quicker because they're
8 there, which that compounds on saving other
9 people's lives because we don't have ten
10 ambulances. We have one ambulance in our barn. We
11 take someone to Westlake and get back in service
12 because we may have another call, and we get right
13 back in service from Westlake Hospital, which, when
14 you have someone else that has a traumatic injury,
15 that allows us to get back in service right away.

16 Second, I speak from the standpoint of
17 being a child that my parents took me to Westlake
18 Hospital whenever there was an ailment. So, as a
19 child, I grew up only going to Westlake Hospital.
20 And very interesting story, as the doctor says,
21 people walk to Westlake Hospital. So since I only
22 knew about Westlake Hospital, at 17, my girlfriend,
23 who is my current wife now, happened to cut her arm
24 at her home, and, at 17, the only place I could go

1 was Westlake Hospital.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: All right.

3 MR. HARVEY: So we wrapped up her arm and
4 walked to Westlake Hospital to get treatment. So
5 without Westlake Hospital being there, it would
6 have been very traumatic.

7 Also, the closing of Westlake Hospital,
8 it would be a significant impact to our local
9 community. If Westlake was to close, it would
10 reduce the number of labor and delivery hospitals
11 available for emergency transportation by 33
12 percent. Or even greater concern is the fact that
13 Westlake is currently the only hospital in our area
14 that has an in-patient psychiatric unit. Both
15 Loyola and Elmhurst transfer psychiatric patients
16 to other facilities at this time.

17 So, lastly, as I spoke, there's about 800
18 families that would possibly lose their employment,
19 and that would be a ripple effect on our
20 communities because we have several of those
21 families that live in our communities that pay
22 bills every day, they go to work every day, whose
23 kids depend on them to go to work.

24 If we lose those residents, those jobs,

1 there's going to be a hardship on our residents as
2 well, and we don't want a hardship on our
3 residents. So I'm here to say we have to keep
4 Westlake open.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: True.

6 MR. HARVEY: Last thing: I am a product
7 of Westlake Hospital, so -- a lot of people don't
8 know this -- but I actually worked at Westlake
9 Hospital from 1989 to 1990 (ph), and Westlake
10 Hospital is not just a community hospital but it's
11 a family. So people look forward to going to
12 Westlake Hospital. As I stated, I drove the
13 ambulance for a lot of years. I have patients that
14 weren't even sick that want to go back to Westlake
15 Hospital just because, as we get older, our
16 seniors, we get lonely, and we want that attention.
17 And I've had seniors that say "Take me to Westlake
18 Hospital," and Westlake never turned them away.

19 So please, please help us fight to keep
20 Westlake open. Thank you.

21 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: No. 5?

22 MR. SERPICO: I guess I'll take a
23 backseat to the doctors. A couple of things: I
24 actually prepared text but all of the -- my name

1 for the record is Ron Serpico. S as in "Sam" e-r-p
2 as in "Peter" i-c-o. I've been the mayor of
3 Melrose Park, it will be 22 years May 1st, but more
4 importantly, probably the Village of Melrose Park
5 residents. July 20th will be my 67th birthday and
6 my 67th year here.

7 I'm not going to take much time, but I
8 want to comment on a couple of things, that
9 Dr. Ward mentioned and that Andre mentioned, you
10 know, one of the things, we had to ask the fire
11 chief, because, obviously, we have two hospitals
12 here, and last year, we had 600 emergency room
13 visits at Westlake. He mentioned 600. That's 1200
14 without the other communities. And I remember the
15 word "bypass" came up and I think -- and correct me
16 if I'm wrong -- if one of the emergency rooms was
17 too busy, they say, Hey, don't take your folks or
18 you've got to take them somewhere else. So that's
19 just 1200 calls. And, of course, the observation
20 and of course what Dr. Ward talked about is the
21 time frame of what you need when you have a stroke
22 patient. So I just can't underemphasize that.

23 Glenn Kushner did a great job. He took
24 all my material. But what I do want to mention

1 that folks wouldn't know, several months ago, I got
2 a call from Dr. Whitaker, very short conversation.
3 He indicated that they were going to be purchasing
4 the hospital. Several weeks ago, I was at the
5 hospital, and I ran into the CEO, who is actually a
6 very nice guy who is in a very tough position
7 because I think they've got him in a vise too. So
8 one of the things that I wound up doing, I met a
9 gentleman named Mr. Ward -- no, Edwards. Is it
10 Edwards? Edwards. I think he's the money guy.
11 He's from Pennsylvania.

12 And I sat in the CEO's office and we
13 visited for 15 minutes, 20 minutes, and not once --
14 not once in that conversation did he mention that
15 the hospital was going to be closing. Not one
16 time. We talked about occupational health. We're
17 talked about, you know, the sun, the moon, the
18 stars. Not one time was that brought up.

19 And I think that's the key thing about
20 what's happened here today. There's been this
21 total misrepresentation. You know, being a
22 neighborhood guy, I thought about this isn't a bar
23 where we have got two sets of books. Right? This
24 is what we really show, what we really make, and

1 this is what we show the government. There's no
2 secret here.

3 As a lawyer, I know people do their
4 diligence. Who is going to spend \$70 million
5 without knowing what the hell's going on? So
6 that's completely disingenuous and really a
7 disgrace. So, obviously, from Jump Street, they
8 knew what they were going to do.

9 Another was mentioned, (indiscernible),
10 and I'm not going to mention his friend, but you
11 hear about Dr. Whitaker and his friends. So them
12 people think this is being done because there's
13 some back-street motive of what's going to happen.
14 But I'm here to assure you, I'm going toe to toe
15 with them at the State of Illinois. The Village of
16 Melrose Park is not going to stand for this to
17 happen.

18 As I talked with Dr. Kushner, when he
19 called me about the concerns of the docs, I said,
20 "Doc, we're going to do everything. And obviously,
21 we appreciate all the support and we did that and
22 we filed the lawsuit and we're not going to give up
23 on this." I thought my kids were (indiscernible)
24 because they were delivered at Loyola, but all my

1 nieces, nephews, they were all delivered at
2 Westlake, and I have a lot of good friends there.
3 Dr. Scharg, he gave my father an angiogram. I
4 don't know, he's been giving angiograms probably
5 for 50 years. Is he here?

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No. He's --

7 MR. SERPICO: And my father used to give
8 him cigars. But in closing -- again, I don't want
9 to rehash everything that's been said. It's been
10 said, and it's on the record, and I'll turn to my
11 (indiscernible), but the one thing I would like to
12 mention is the review board is rewarded Section 15
13 in health facilities planning and it also provides
14 the Attorney General the powers to investigate and
15 enforce the act, including by seeking injunctive
16 relief, levying fines for noncompliance, and other
17 remedies. Given the sequence of events, the
18 Village requests that the review board ask the
19 Attorney General to open an investigation in these
20 matters and to ensure that Westlake cannot be
21 acquired and closed on the basis of fraud.

22 So on behalf of the Village of Melrose
23 Park, I want to thank you for holding the
24 supportive hearing today, and I hope that the

1 review board sees fit to refer this matter to the
2 Attorney General for investigation. Thank you.

3 And, oh, the other thing I wanted to add
4 is my friend in the front row said that I should go
5 there for bariatric surgery. That's the truth.

6 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: No. 6?

7 MR. WELCH: Good afternoon, everyone.

8 VARIOUS: Good afternoon.

9 MR. WELCH: My name is Emmanuel Chris
10 Welch. W-e-l-c-h like the grape juice. I wish I
11 could take you-all everywhere with me.

12 I have served as the state representative
13 for the 7th District since 2013. The 7th District
14 covers parts of Maywood, Melrose Park, Bellwood,
15 and several other communities that are served by
16 Westlake Hospital. Since October 2010, I have
17 served as the chair of Westlake Hospital's board of
18 trustees and had the honor of serving along with
19 Dr. Kushner and Dr. Saleh and several other good,
20 hard-working doctors who give their life and blood
21 and soul to Westlake.

22 On February 6, 1971, I was proudly born
23 at Westlake Hospital. And I am strongly opposed to
24 closing Westlake Hospital. I can tell you, having

1 served alongside Joe Ottolino, he's opposed to them
2 closing Westlake Hospital too. Pipeline Health is
3 lying to him just like they lied to our community.

4 During my time, we have seen several
5 changes of ownership, from Resurrection to
6 Vanguard, from Vanguard to Tenant, and now Tenant
7 to Pipeline Health. Sale after sale, we witnessed
8 these for-profit health corporations decimate
9 Westlake Hospital for their own corporate gain.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's right.

11 MR. WELCH: They even took community out
12 of the name, Westlake Community Hospital. And now,
13 they're trying to take Westlake out of the
14 community. We cannot and we will not let that
15 happen. We cannot let them close the doors to
16 Westlake Hospital because next year, it's going to
17 be West Suburban Hospital, and after that, it's
18 going to be Weiss Hospital. It's going to be one
19 hospital after another. People will die if we let
20 them close these doors.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: True.

22 MR. WELCH: We have to stop this madness,
23 and this board that we're speaking before today has
24 the power to stop it. Pipeline Health acquired

1 Westlake under false pretenses. That's to be
2 underscored. False pretenses. And we are here
3 today to ask this board to hold them to the
4 commitments that they gave you when they filed
5 their application for change of ownership. In
6 their sworn application, Pipeline specifically
7 stated that their charity care policy would not be
8 more restrictive than the current charity care
9 policies at Westlake. They also stated that their
10 charity care would remain in place for no less than
11 two years following the consummation of the
12 transaction. They also swore under oath that,
13 following the transaction, Westlake will continue
14 to operate for the benefit of the residents of
15 Chicago and the greater Chicago area, including
16 serving the poor and underserved individuals
17 through Westlake's charitable activities. And they
18 also swore under oath the transaction set forth in
19 their change of ownership application will result
20 in no changes to the scope of Westlake services.

21 These are the exact same statements that
22 were made by Dr. Eric Whitaker and other
23 representatives of Pipeline during the entire
24 purchasing process and consistent with statements

1 made to the community members, to the board
2 members, to the doctors, the staff, and in the
3 media. Just Google it. Every statement they made
4 in the media was that they were going to invest in
5 these hospitals. They actually made those
6 statements in a braggadocios kind of way, that
7 that's what they were known for.

8 We all relied on these statements, and we
9 did not object to the change of ownership during
10 that process because there was no need to object.
11 Two weeks -- two weeks after purchasing the
12 hospital, Pipeline decided to close the hospital.
13 They didn't learn something new in just two weeks.
14 All of the facts that they knew two weeks after
15 they purchased the hospital, they knew before they
16 bought it. That is why we have to stand up, we
17 have to fight back, and we have to hold them to
18 their commitments.

19 Will you join us in the fight?

20 VARIOUS: Yes!

21 MR. WELCH: We are going to continue the
22 fight, and this board, we're going to get them to
23 fight with us because the board has the power to do
24 just that.

1 We are asking this board to do two things
2 following this hearing. It is within their powers.
3 Number one, under the board's rules, you have the
4 power to suspend the approval process during the
5 pendency of litigation. Litigation -- good
6 litigation is currently pending against Pipeline
7 Health and several other defendants because the
8 mayor of Melrose Park has stood up and is fighting
9 back.

10 And No. 2, we are asking this board, an
11 official State board, that Pipeline made official
12 misrepresentations to you under oath. We're asking
13 this State board to call on our Attorney General
14 and to do an official investigation of Pipeline
15 Health, Orosano, Whitaker, and everyone else who
16 made misrepresentations to this board. They should
17 never be allowed to come before this board again
18 and make additional misrepresentations.

19 No one knew that Pipeline Health was
20 buying Westlake Hospital to actually kill it. Who
21 knew that Pipeline Health was buying Westlake
22 Hospital to kill it?

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Whitaker.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No way.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Whitaker.

2 MR. WELCH: None of us knew it.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

4 MR. WELCH: But certainly they knew. We
5 are here today asking this board to give us a
6 lifeline. Help us save Westlake. You have that
7 power to do it. Help us keep Westlake open. You
8 have that power to do it. And we are going to
9 continue to fight back every step of the way until
10 you do it. Thank you so much.

11 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: No. 8? No. 8?

12 MR. KRECH: Good afternoon. My name is
13 William Krech, W-i-l-l-i-a-m. Krech is K-r-e-c-h.
14 Many of you know me as BJ.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Sir, we can't hear
16 you.

17 MR. KRECH: I may --

18 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Get close to
19 the microphone.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

21 MR. KRECH: I'm the chief strategy
22 officer at Westlake Hospital and West Suburban
23 Medical Center. As the healthcare strategist, we
24 are seeing many trends across the country today.

1 Some of those current trends include an increase in
2 mergers and acquisition activity which includes
3 providing economies of scale and consolidation of
4 services. Local examples of these mergers include
5 partnerships such as Advocate and Aurora Healthcare
6 teaming up, and the recent AMEDA (ph) presence
7 partnership.

8 Another trend we have seen nationally is
9 in a shift from in-patient care to outpatient care,
10 also known as ambulatory care.

11 Finally, technology continues to evolve
12 the industry, affording customers and consumers the
13 ability to better engage in their care through
14 electronic medical records, enhanced diagnostic
15 capabilities, and less evasive procedural options.
16 These healthcare trends across the country are
17 happening here in Illinois and locally in the
18 western suburbs. This has required many
19 organizations, both locally and nationally, to
20 adapt quickly, and Pipeline Healthcare is doing
21 just that.

22 The plan proposed is believed to achieve
23 high-quality care outcomes in line with current
24 trends and landscape of the industry. Pipeline's

1 plan will deliver residents the best modern care in
2 three ways.

3 First, we will be able to invest in West
4 Suburban Medical Center, a sister hospital to
5 Westlake and a short distance from Melrose Park.
6 Today there's a significant overlap in categories
7 of services at Westlake and West Suburban campuses.
8 By combining key services, we will be able to
9 maximize the level of service provided from both a
10 patient experience standpoint as well as a quality
11 perspective.

12 West Suburban currently has the capacity
13 to accommodate patients, allowing for a smooth
14 consolidation, while combining forces in newborn
15 deliveries, medical subspecialties, surgical
16 services, which include our bariatric service
17 center of excellence, as well as intensive care and
18 emergency room services.

19 West Suburban has a strong foundation
20 upon which we can build. It has earned an A rating
21 for patient safety from the non-profit Leapfrog in
22 12 out of the last 13 periods. In the latest
23 report from the Centers of Medicare and Medicaid
24 Services, known as CMS, it has awarded West Sub a

1 four-star rating for a wide variety of quality
2 measures in its hospital compare program.

3 Through consolidation efforts, Pipeline
4 will be able to continue to invest and build upon
5 West Suburban's community, supporting programs such
6 as their progressive birthing center, their dynamic
7 opioid treatment facility, their medical food
8 pantry, and their wealth guarded surgical services.

9 The second way this plan will deliver the
10 best modern healthcare approach to residents is
11 through a commitment to Melrose Park in outpatient
12 services. They have committed an investment that
13 includes \$500,000 grant in funding over five years
14 to the PCC community wellness center, a federally
15 qualified health center, and another 2 million for
16 enhanced ambulatory and outpatient care services in
17 Melrose Park.

18 As Joe stated earlier, we believe in the
19 effectiveness of outpatient and community-based
20 care.

21 Finally, we understand that
22 transportation is a limiting factor for access and
23 care, which is why Pipeline is committed to
24 offering transportation services from Westlake

1 campus to West Suburban, as well as River Forest
2 medical campus, which Pipeline also owns and
3 operates.

4 Although the plan includes change, we are
5 confident that community members will continue to
6 have access to appropriate care in both an
7 ambulatory and acute care setting. In today's
8 healthcare landscape, consolidation of services,
9 continue development of outpatient services, and
10 technological advances will help pave the way
11 forward for our future generations. Thank you for
12 your time today.

13 VARIOUS: Boo!

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Once a liar,
15 always a liar.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Liar, liar, liar.

17 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: No. 9?

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I don't buy it.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Takes a half hour
20 to get to West Suburban and two minutes to get
21 here.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I don't buy it at
23 all.

24 MS. LENNON: Thank you. I'm Roslyn

1 Lennon. R-o-s-l-y-n, L-e-n-n-o-n.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can't hear.

3 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Can you guys
4 please keep it down so we can hear the speaker?
5 Thank you.

6 MS. LENNON: I'm Roslyn Lennon,
7 R-o-s-l-y-n, L-e-n-n-o-n. Good afternoon. I'm
8 Roslyn Lennon, chief nursing officer at Westlake
9 Hospital and West Suburban Medical Center. I have
10 been a nurse for more than 35 years and have
11 privileges serving the Chicago land area through my
12 entire career. My experience in healthcare has
13 allowed me to witness the growing and changing
14 needs of the population as well as the changing
15 landscape of healthcare. From the early beginnings
16 of HMOs to the more recent value-based care models,
17 we are amidst another paradigm shift in the
18 industry.

19 As mentioned by my colleagues before me,
20 the future of healthcare is shifting to an
21 outpatient setting where advances have been made
22 for better patient care and better patient
23 experience and less invasive solutions. Patient
24 care and outcomes are better when doctors get to

1 know patients and see them regularly, something
2 that is hard to accomplish in an emergency room
3 setting where many patients currently go for their
4 primary care.

5 I know that many have concerns about
6 access to these specific types of care that we
7 might currently receive at Westlake Hospital. We
8 have heard those concerns and resolved them in
9 several ways. We have made a significant grant to
10 PCC Wellness of Westlake, which provides prenatal
11 and behavioral health services.

12 At West Suburban, there is a capacity for
13 additional OB care as well. And finally, an opioid
14 clinic is located at PCC Wellness of West Suburban
15 location.

16 Through this transition, the community of
17 Melrose Park and beyond will also continue to be
18 supported by at least four nearby healthcare
19 facilities, including the River Forest medical
20 campus, which is 2.2 miles away; West Suburban
21 medical center at 4 miles; Gottlieb Memorial
22 Hospital, a Level 2 trauma center is less than two
23 miles; and Loyola Medical Center, which is a Level
24 1 trauma center, three miles away.

1 Today, community-based and outpatient
2 care are the front lines of delivering quality and
3 cost-effective healthcare. I have seen this
4 firsthand in my work. It's why Pipeline will make
5 a large financial commitment to expand outpatient
6 care in Melrose Park. This expanded outpatient
7 care will be developed with input from the local
8 community and based on the community's healthcare
9 needs.

10 We understand that Westlake Hospital's
11 not only a place where the community seeks care but
12 also where they work. To assist in this
13 transition, we have already initiated the process
14 for priority consideration for Westlake employees
15 to consider job openings at West Suburban Medical
16 Center and Weiss Hospital.

17 Additionally, we have contacted other
18 area hospitals and health systems to invite them to
19 conduct on-site interviews with our valued
20 employees at Westlake. Additionally, we are
21 arranging outpatient support, such as resume
22 writing and interview techniques, for employees who
23 feel the need for these services. Any employees
24 who qualify will receive a severance package as

1 well.

2 As we all navigate the changing landscape
3 and consider the various factors, we will continue
4 to work hard to serve our patients and our staff
5 and the community. Thank you for your time.

6 VARIOUS: Boo! Boo!

7 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: No. 12. And
8 please -- I just want to reiterate, while someone's
9 up here speaking, we need to keep it down so that
10 the court reporter can be sure to take everything
11 down so that the board members can actually be able
12 to read what's being transcribed. So please keep
13 it down when someone's up here speaking.

14 MS. MOORE: Good afternoon. Mary-Rita
15 Moore. Mary, hyphen, capital R-i-t-a, Moore,
16 president, Triton College.

17 Thank you, all the supporters of Westlake
18 Hospital. On behalf of Triton College, I am
19 submitting points of impact related to the closure
20 of Westlake Hospital. Westlake closure means the
21 loss of a vital hub of the community healthcare
22 system and the elimination of an important clinical
23 learning experience and work environment for Triton
24 College healthcare students. Triton College has

1 been engaged in a 29-year partnership with Westlake
2 Hospital, with 30 students currently participating
3 in clinical rotations at the hospital. In the last
4 three years, more than 300 students have honed
5 their medical and patient services in clinical
6 rotations at Westlake Hospital. Historically,
7 Triton College nurses have completed their
8 clinicals at Westlake Hospital.

9 Losing access to Westlake will be
10 detrimental to Triton students, as its proximity to
11 the Triton College campus is not only a convenience
12 but a necessity.

13 Healthcare jobs provide Triton students
14 with opportunities to serve their communities while
15 pursuing worthwhile careers. Westlake's closure
16 means current and future Triton students will be
17 required to find clinical locations further from
18 home and the communities in which they serve. This
19 may also discourage future students for applying to
20 Triton College health career programs, potentially
21 reducing the number of qualified healthcare
22 professionals serving our community.

23 Westlake's closure jeopardizes Triton
24 College's ability to provide hands-on work

1 rotations to promising high school students
2 interested in pursuing healthcare careers. And
3 equally important, Triton College will be
4 challenged to find new clinical sites to support
5 current and future students.

6 I ask the board for their consideration
7 of these important factors, and it's greatly
8 appreciated. Thank you so very much.

9 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: No. 13.

10 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

11 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Get really
12 close to the microphone.

13 MS. PECHULIS: My name is Shellye
14 Pechulis, and I've been a nurse for over 40 years.
15 I've been a charge nurse in the emergency at
16 Westlake for the last five years. Westlake
17 Hospital is a community hospital, which is also, by
18 definition, a safety hospital. We serve a
19 predominantly black and brown population from
20 Melrose Park and the surrounding communities. Our
21 patients are either medicaid, medicare, or
22 uninsured. We turn nobody away from our doors.

23 We pride ourselves in that we are a
24 certified stroke center, certified through the

1 American Heart Association and the Joint
2 Commission. We are also an EDAP emergency room,
3 which is a certified emergency room for pediatric
4 emergencies. All of our nurses are certified in
5 advanced cardiac life support, pediatric life
6 support, and CPR. The majority of us are also
7 ECRMs, which are nurses that answer the radio and
8 guide paramedics through their care of our patients
9 in the field.

10 We are the only hospital in Melrose Park
11 that is stroke certified and EDAP certified. We
12 are also the only hospital in the region that has
13 acute mental health clinics. The other hospital
14 has 12 beds for geriatric behavioral health, not
15 acute mental health.

16 We have 50 beds, which are almost always
17 full. Our mental health patients range between the
18 ages of 18 and 65. When the other hospitals go on
19 bypass because they're full, Westlake absorbs all
20 of their ambulance calls. These hospitals go on
21 bypass on average of two to three times per week,
22 with an average of 12 hours per bypass. A lot of
23 the time, they both go on bypass at the same time.
24 Westlake turns no ambulances away.

1 Our patients we see in the emergency room
2 are from several surrounding communities and
3 Melrose Park. They depend on us for all their
4 medical needs. Our patients are the working, poor,
5 and homeless. Our patients are medically
6 complicated because either they don't take their
7 medications because they can't afford them or they
8 don't see doctors because they don't have the
9 money. The homeless are brought in because they
10 are found on the streets, sleeping wherever they
11 can. Our patients range from the drug addicted to
12 the elderly person who is neglected. Our
13 psychiatric population is a constant with us
14 because they know that we will care for them and
15 not throw them back on the street. They have no
16 other place to go because we are the only hospital
17 with psychiatric services.

18 Westlake is a community hospital that
19 truly takes care of the community. The majority of
20 employees live within walking distance of the
21 hospital. It is not only home to the employees but
22 our patients because they know that, when they come
23 to Westlake, that we will do anything in our power
24 to care for all their needs without judgment.

1 Pipeline informed the staff at Westlake
2 through an article in the newspaper that we were
3 closing. It was not until the next day that we
4 were informed through the email that the hospital
5 was shuttering. They held town hall meetings at
6 West -- at Weiss and West Sub, but the staff at
7 Westlake has not even seen Pipeline yet. There's
8 been no town hall meetings held for us. But
9 they're sending people to Westlake to remove
10 furniture and equipment, which puts our patients at
11 risk.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's the best
13 fitness center.

14 MS. PECHULIS: Pipeline is treating our
15 staff and patients like we have no meaning are and
16 easily thrown away. These patients deserve to have
17 a hospital within their community that they trust
18 and they know they receive excellent care for all
19 their needs. We treat the whole person. Just
20 because we are predominantly brown or black, with
21 medicaid, medicare, or uninsured does not mean that
22 we can be disposed of at the beck and call of a
23 profit industry.

24 Healthcare should not be up for sale to

1 make a profit. Healthcare is a right for all. It
2 is not a commodity that is sold to the highest
3 bidder. Our patients will parish if Westlake
4 closes. Our psychiatric patients will have no
5 in-patient services during their delusional states.
6 Our homeless will freeze to death in the winter
7 months and heat exhaustion in the summer months.
8 And our OB patients will not trust another hospital
9 because of their language barriers, and a bus
10 between Westlake and West Sub will not curtail
11 that. Please help us keep Westlake open.

12 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: No. 16?

13 THE WITNESS: Good afternoon. My name is
14 Debra Baker, D-e-b-r-a, B-a-k-e-r. I am the chief
15 academic officer at Triton College and a long-time
16 very proud member of the faculty in health careers.

17 So I speak to you today from that point
18 of view. I couldn't help but feel, as I've been
19 sitting here listening to everybody, how similar
20 Triton College is to Westlake Hospital. We, too,
21 don't turn people away. We serve our community.
22 All sorts of people come to us and we serve them.

23 It will be very difficult for us to lose
24 Westlake Hospital as a clinical facility. It is a

1 hub of our clinical components to many of our
2 programs. So please know that Triton College
3 stands with you in your quest to save Westlake
4 Hospital. Thank you.

5 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: No. 17?

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Are we supposed to
7 turn these things in or what?

8 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: When your
9 number is called.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: 36 and 37.

11 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Down a little
12 ways.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What kind of math
14 you got?

15 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: I work for the
16 government.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Get tired of
18 sitting.

19 MS. ROSAS: Thank you, everyone. My name
20 is Jesse Rosas, and I'm the executive director of
21 the Horizon (indiscernible) Health Commission.
22 Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

23 I'm here today and I heard people touch
24 on it to speak for those families that are

1 suffering from behavioral health concerns.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can't hear you.

3 MR. ROSAS: Just a little while ago, I
4 spoke about the clients that we see. I spoke about
5 the clients that we see, specifically about the 648
6 that came to us in crisis. Most of them came
7 through the Westlake emergency rooms. After
8 hearing about the plant closing, all we've been
9 receiving is calls, what's going to happen to them.
10 They're really worried.

11 We're not going to let Pipeline come into
12 our state, come into our county, and now come into
13 the community and take siege of our behavioral
14 health. We're just not going to let it happen. We
15 are not going quietly. These are hard-working
16 people, and they deserve better.

17 Most of the people that we work with --
18 and don't believe that we have not noticed --
19 Westlake serves the minority population. Westlake
20 serves our low income and they serve a large part
21 of our senior adults. Yet, here they are, trying
22 to take away their services. One part of the
23 government is telling me we are in the biggest
24 opioid crisis in the country. And what is Pipeline

1 doing? Taking our services away.

2 So I'm here to say that we're going to do
3 everything we can to fight them, everything we can
4 to ensure that Westlake continues to serve the
5 people of Proviso. All right. Thank you,
6 everyone.

7 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: No. 18?

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We got a better
9 fitness center than they got though. They got
10 nothing.

11 MS. CAMPOS: If you can't hear me, I'm
12 going to use my teacher voice. I am Susan Campos.
13 I'm from Triton College. C-a-m-p-o-s.

14 I have the honor of being the dean of
15 health careers at Triton College, and the students
16 that my predecessors talked about are my students
17 that will be affected by the close of this
18 hospital. We're a community college. We're part
19 of your community. We serve the same people you
20 do. Our students chose Triton College, they chose
21 health careers because they want to make an impact.
22 They like to have community hospitals around them.
23 Our students are young mothers, young fathers.
24 They have part -time jobs. They have full

1 schedules.

2 Having a clinical setting in their
3 community helps them be successful because time
4 management is very important for our students. But
5 more importantly, they like to be -- have a
6 presence in their own community to help serve.
7 Removing Westlake as a clinical site from Triton
8 College has a huge impact. As the president has
9 spoken from Triton College, all of our nursing
10 students rotate through Westlake. All of our
11 surgical technology, radiology students, ultrasound
12 students all have had an impact learning. Our
13 success stories become Westlake's success stories.
14 Almost every ultrasound technologist, almost every
15 radiology technologist at the hospital are our
16 graduates and are working at your hospital. They
17 would like to continue to do that and be success
18 stories not only for our college but for the
19 community itself. Please keep Westlake open.

20 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: No. 19?

21 MS. LeBEAU: Hello. I'm Norma LeBeau,
22 N-o-r-m-a, capital L-e capital B-e-a-u. I'll tell
23 you how I started to be an operator. When I was 15
24 years old, in World War II, I became a

1 long-distance operator at 212 Washington downtown.
2 I passed the test in two weeks and worked many
3 years there. Then I got old enough and I went and
4 opened an answering service for a gentleman, for
5 doctors. I ran that hospital in that office for
6 several years until Westlake called me and asked me
7 if I would like a job there in their switchboard
8 room. I went down. The first day, they hired me.
9 I immediately notified my boss I wanted to go to
10 Westlake, and I stayed there for 35 years.

11 (Indiscernible) I would go back tomorrow
12 because Westlake will never close as long as we
13 have the best doctors in this area.

14 I have over 25 grandchildren, great
15 grandchildren and more delivered at Westlake.
16 Thank God to Dr. Sam Yunez, my little granddaughter
17 who was 15 with cancer, and then she was old enough
18 to have her first baby when she got married. He
19 was willing to handle her case. He took care of
20 her and made sure that she went to Ronald McDonald
21 Cancer research, and today, she is a mother with
22 two beautiful Spanish, Irish, and Italian boys.
23 And believe me, we love him.

24 My children and my daughter -- and the

1 sisters had babies with our doctor. He delivered
2 them. And I will fight for Westlake for all you
3 people, the nurses that work there, the emergency
4 room, the OB, every department, you can't beat it
5 in this area.

6 I live one block away. I wear a life
7 alert. I'm 88 years old. And I will fight and
8 fight (indiscernible).

9 And I still drive a car with no
10 restrictions.

11 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: No. 20?

12 MS. WILLIS: How do I follow that, guys?
13 I am State Representative Kathleen Willis from the
14 7th Circuit. W-i-l-l-i-s.

15 I represent the area where Westlake
16 Hospital is. I walk that community. I talk to
17 people that live and work in that community. That
18 is important for us to keep those doors open.

19 Pipeline has gone and lied to us. They
20 told us that they were going to come in and they
21 were going to keep everything the same. Less than
22 two weeks later, they told us they're going to
23 close the doors. I found out when I was down in
24 Springfield, and I immediately got on the phone and

1 said, This can't happen, what can we do to stop
2 this?

3 So with my good friend, Representative
4 Welch, we came up with this plan. We're going to
5 do everything within our power to stop this from
6 happening. We know -- we know that Westlake is
7 important to the community. It does more than just
8 give healthcare to the community. It is a help to
9 the community. It provides jobs to people in the
10 community. It is a community resource. So there
11 are many, many things that we see in there. It is
12 a part and a member of our community there in
13 Melrose Park, and that's what we need to do.

14 I am imploring the medical -- the review
15 board to stop this closure. That is their job. I
16 am hoping that they will hear this today. They
17 also heard what we said last Friday. We held a
18 legislative hearing before the Human Services
19 Appropriation Review Board before our committee,
20 and we talked about how important it was to keep
21 Westlake Hospital open. We had over 15 people
22 testify. Those were doctors, nurses, employees,
23 community members, people throughout the area to
24 tell us why it was important to keep it open. We

1 heard them. We will work for them. We will go
2 forward and we will keep the hospital open as much
3 as -- every way we can, we're going to fight this.

4 We know -- and I'm not naive to know that
5 hospitals have evolved over the years. We know
6 that happens. But we also know that there is still
7 a need for community-based healthcare and hospitals
8 in your own community. That doesn't mean we close
9 them down. It means we work to make sure that they
10 stay and they evolve also with the need for new
11 healthcare in the community.

12 To say that it's easy to go over to West
13 Suburban or Weiss Hospital for your care is not
14 understanding our communities. That is not what we
15 want to see happen. To expect a family to get on a
16 bus with a woman that is expecting a baby and
17 possibly two or three other small children and to
18 expect them to go over to a hospital that, yeah,
19 maybe it's only four miles away, that four miles is
20 not a comfortable four miles to do on a little tiny
21 bus. That is not what we want to see happening.

22 What happens if you need to get to the
23 hospital in the middle of the night where the bus
24 run isn't going? That doesn't make sense to us at

1 all.

2 So I have gone and taken a number of
3 steps to make sure that this happens. We have
4 supported the mayor in his lawsuit in making sure
5 that this does stop, but we have also filed
6 legislation to try to stop this procedure from
7 happening, and we will be working with the review
8 board to make sure that we make this the best
9 legislation going forward. So we're hoping that
10 House Bill 123 will stop this closure. We're
11 hoping that is going to happen. I have support in
12 the Senate and support in the House with this, and
13 we're going to continue to work for that.

14 But I want you to know that we need to
15 keep Westlake open not only because it's
16 community-based, because it does the mental health
17 work that we need, it does the maternal work that
18 we need. We also know that it has occupational
19 health. We heard from previous doctors about the
20 stroke center that we have there. We also have
21 heard about the importance of our emergency room
22 access there.

23 Not to mention the outpatient things that
24 we also do at Westlake Hospital. I see Dr. Alvarez

1 in the audience. She does wonderful community
2 outreach. If we close the hospital, we're going
3 lose that. We're going to lose the senior centers
4 that we have there. Those clinics that we have
5 that constantly go on so that you can get help on
6 your diet. If you're a diabetic or if you need to
7 get your blood pressure checked, all of those
8 things happen under the guise of Westlake Hospital.
9 So, please, continue with us on this fight. We
10 need to keep Westlake Hospital open.

11 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: No. 21?

12 THE WITNESS: Thank you. Hello.

13 VARIOUS: Hi.

14 THE WITNESS: Here we go. Don't worry;
15 I'm loud (indiscernible) so if this goes go off
16 (indiscernible), it's okay.

17 My name is Christina Govas,
18 C-h-r-i-s-t-i-n-a, last name, G-o-v-a-s. I'm a
19 medical student. I'm speaking, opposing the
20 closure of Westlake Hospital for many, many
21 reasons, including the benefit to the community,
22 the amazing team that works at the hospital and of
23 course on behalf of the many medical students who
24 have had the opportunity to do clinical rotations

1 at Westlake Hospital.

2 I cannot express my gratitude for having
3 had the opportunity to learn at a hospital whose
4 staff takes the time to teach. Here, I have
5 experienced babies taking their first breath, women
6 getting gynecological care they so desperately
7 need, life -- I have seen life-saving surgeries
8 performed, psychiatric patients who need care
9 tended to, many emergency visits at all hours,
10 including many acute stroke patients, rehab
11 patients, and I have even seen people being brought
12 back to life.

13 If these patients didn't have this
14 hospital near them, where would they have gone?
15 Would they have made it on time? I don't know.

16 The experiences I have had at Westlake
17 and the opportunity I have had to learn at the
18 hospital filled with staff that are so dedicated to
19 their community and their patients has left an
20 impression on me so strong that it will stay with
21 me for my entire career. Thank you, Westlake, for
22 having me. I hope future medical students are able
23 to have had this incredible opportunity to learn
24 from you as I have. And for these reasons, I am

1 opposed to Westlake Hospital closing. Thank you so
2 much.

3 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: No. 22?

4 FATHER BIZZOTTO: I'm Father Giovanni
5 Bizzotto, B-i-z-z-o-t-t-o is last name.
6 G-i-o-v-a-n-n-i, first name.

7 I'm the pastor of Our Lady of Mount
8 Carmel, which is a few blocks away, and would like
9 to make the statement as a religion leader.

10 (Indiscernible) that we care for our spiritual
11 (indiscernible) people but it's no way we can take
12 care of the spiritual well-being of the people if
13 we don't have a good health system around that we
14 can work together. So along with all the different
15 religious leader, civil and religious authority,
16 certainly, it is a very terrible, poor, selfish
17 that we make a decision that I heard that Pipeline
18 Health (indiscernible) are making against Westlake
19 Hospital for the sole reason of their profit and
20 business interests. It was yesterday the chief
21 says what's up in the (indiscernible) about time.
22 Greed, power, and glory. We know that Westlake is
23 a community hospital.

24 Saturday night after the mass, somebody

1 came up to me who has been discharged from
2 Westlake. He was in a very poor condition. They
3 took care of him for four days, and he came there,
4 and we completed the process, then he came home.
5 And he received the benefit because they really
6 help him out.

7 When all the surrounding villages, many
8 simple people, low income, middle-class people,
9 family members who will then come walking most of
10 the time to Westlake Hospital for easy access. We,
11 as a community, also are partaking in many
12 different humanitarian projects of workshop of
13 Westlake Hospital, particular with our community
14 center. We carry on workshop for different level
15 for the people.

16 I heard in the last two weeks dozens of
17 people coming to me, begging, please help us to
18 save our hospital. Lucy said, My babies were born
19 there. Mary: My mother was (indiscernible) there.
20 Several employees would come to me asking for
21 prayers because they're very much scared what is
22 going to happen in the shortcoming near future for
23 them.

24 Every time I go to visit somebody or pray

1 for somebody or (indiscernible) anoint somebody,
2 (indiscernible) two or three people say hi to me.
3 I have been here only for one year but our
4 community is very much moving around Westlake
5 Hospital.

6 I simply believe our beautiful community
7 needs Westlake, and I pray that altogether we be
8 make, as already been stated, Illinois Health
9 Facilities and Service Review Board, the state
10 representatives who are here, our local leaders,
11 along with our mayor (indiscernible) and the
12 others, do everything possible not to have the
13 Pipeline to get away with our hospital. They came
14 here saying, as we heard, they believe in community
15 hospital. One month later, they're ready to close
16 the door and leave us without hospital. The people
17 of Melrose Park, Stone Park, Melwood and all the
18 other villages deserve affordable health care, and
19 we need Westlake to stay. We cannot think this is
20 great decision for them that, for me, it's called
21 hypocrisy. Thanks but no thanks. We need Westlake
22 to stay.

23 In closing, let's continue to raise your
24 voices to our (indiscernible) leaders to get

1 Pipeline accountable and continue serving and
2 invest in our community. This is the reason for
3 which they said they came to serve the community,
4 so let us have them demonstrate and not to be
5 (indiscernible). God bless you.

6 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: 23?

7 MS. VARA: Buenos Aires.

8 VARIOUS: Buenos Aires.

9 MS. VARA: (Speaking Spanish.)

10 My name is Estela Vara. I'm community
11 organizer with PASO (indiscernible) project, and I
12 have been in Melrose Park for more than 14 years.
13 I am here today to express my absolute rejection to
14 close the -- to closure the Westlake Hospital. I
15 went to Westlake Hospital for the first time when
16 my son, Francisco, had a pain in his stomach seven
17 years ago when he was a child. And he had an
18 emergency operation for appendicitis. I felt very
19 blessed to have a hospital find me -- find me
20 (indiscernible) for my son because time was
21 critical for my son life and because the hospital
22 staff make me feel in safety for my family. That
23 day was the first many times that my family and I
24 visited Westlake Hospital.

1 As a member of my community, an organizer
2 with PASO, I am here today to talk (indiscernible)
3 that I would continue organizing and we work with
4 legislators in the area, we work with
5 (indiscernible), religious leaders, institutions,
6 and especially with my community members to avoid
7 closing the hospital. All people of color matter.
8 Thank you.

9 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: No. 24?

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: West Suburban
11 hasn't got a full fitness center.

12 MS. GOMEZ: (Through translator:)

13 THE INTERPRETER: I'm going to translate.

14 Good afternoon. My name is Maria Gomez.
15 I'm a leader of the organization, PASO, and I have
16 lived in the community for more than 17 years. I'm
17 here today as a leader of PASO and as a member of
18 my community to ask that this hospital not be
19 closed.

20 Westlake Hospital is very important to
21 me. My grandchildren were born there. I have had
22 surgeries -- emergency surgeries there, and the
23 hospital has been there for my family on several
24 occasions.

1 I have a daughter with special
2 conditions, and Westlake Hospital has always helped
3 me with respect towards my daughter, and we have
4 always felt welcome there.

5 They have also helped me pay my bills
6 when I haven't had enough because I'm a senior
7 citizen of -- a low-income senior citizen.

8 To the owners of the hospital, I ask that
9 you think of me and my neighbors and all of us who
10 live in the area to not close the hospital. This
11 will help our communities of color in the area.
12 Thank you.

13 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: 25?

14 MS. MARIN: Okay. Thank you. Now, I'm
15 speak.

16 My name is Anna Marin, A-n-n-a,
17 M-a-r-i-n. I'm the organizing director of PASO
18 West Suburban action project. PASO is a
19 community-based social justice organization that
20 works to engage community members to address issues
21 that affect them, their families, and their
22 neighbors, with a mission to build stronger
23 communities where all residents can live dignified
24 lives regardless of their race, gender, sexual

1 orientation, socioeconomic or immigration status.

2 PASO is based in Melrose Park and serves
3 the surrounding west Cook County suburbs and some
4 of DuPage County. The Melrose Park community is 70
5 percent Latino and our neighbor, Maywood, is 70
6 percent black. It is no surprise, then, that the
7 population of Westlake -- the population that
8 Westlake Hospital services is also 70 percent black
9 and Latino.

10 The Community Health Needs Assessment
11 Report, published by the Health Impact
12 Collaborative of Cook County in 2016, identified
13 the communities with the highest levels of poverty
14 in the west suburbs as Melrose Park, Stone Park,
15 Maywood, and Franklin Park, some of the very same
16 communities served by Westlake Hospital.

17 In Melrose Park alone, nearly half of the
18 population falls under the 200 percent federal
19 poverty level. The links between poverty and
20 health are well-documented. The West Suburban Cook
21 County mortality rates for heart disease, cancer,
22 and stroke are all higher than the corresponding
23 rates of both suburban Cook County and Illinois as
24 a whole.

1 One major innovator of health disparities
2 that is universally known is life expectancy. The
3 report indicated that Maywood and Melrose Park had
4 the lowest life expectancies in the western
5 suburbs.

6 Can you imagine the impact that closing a
7 hospital in a community with that profile means?
8 It is one thing to imagine the loss of any major
9 health resource, any institution that has kept
10 people well. Now, try to imagine that our
11 population of PASO leaders is also a population of
12 new immigrants, families with children, young
13 people with DACA -- that's Deferred Action for
14 Childhood Arrivals -- that are struggling to work,
15 get an education, raise their families without
16 legal status and without access to healthcare
17 through the Affordable Care Act.

18 Every day, I work with community members
19 who come to PASO for community, legal services,
20 citizenship classes, and to develop their
21 leadership and take action against injustice. The
22 number one issue that our leaders indicate, aside
23 from legal immigrant services, is health. The
24 hospital closing does not just create obstacles and

1 negative outcomes. It changes the nature of work
2 and residents, housing, and education for miles
3 around. In a time when we are finally redefining
4 the role of a hospital to include mental health
5 resources, healthy lifestyle programming, education
6 and prevention, destroying access to an institution
7 that binds our community fabric together multiplies
8 negative consequences and health disparities.

9 We demand that Pipeline consult with the
10 community before closing Westlake Hospital. We
11 demand a full analysis of the health impact so that
12 we can identify the impact on human lives, all of
13 us in this room. We cannot afford to lose a
14 hospital that primarily serves the Latino and black
15 communities. Losing this community anchor will
16 exacerbate the health disparities that already
17 exist in the western suburbs between low income and
18 wealthy communities.

19 If Pipeline continues its plan to close
20 Westlake, we will hold them responsible for the
21 health of the community. We are here to be witness
22 to this preventable disaster and devastation it
23 will cause. Thank you.

24 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: 26? No, 26,

1 sir. 26.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How do you guys
3 count? We have got 36 and 37 before.

4 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Just keep
5 coming forward, sir.

6 MS. ALZAMORAA: Good afternoon. My name
7 is Betty Alzamora. I'm a 12-year activist
8 resident in Forest Park, a volunteer and a board
9 member at PASO West Suburban Action Project. I'm
10 here today to speak in opposition to the closure of
11 Westlake Hospital and to briefly share my thoughts.
12 I stand alongside PASO, the dozens of community
13 members that have shown up today and last Friday,
14 healthcare professionals, first responders, faith
15 leaders, elected officials who have raised their
16 collective voices against a shameful closing.

17 Much has already been said about the
18 volume of Westlake within our community. This is
19 an institution woven into the fabric of the western
20 suburbs (indiscernible) across demographics and
21 generations. It operates with care and compassion
22 across the lines of race, status, social economic
23 standing. It is color blind.

24 Westlake provides services to

1 underrepresented and underserved communities of
2 color in their time of need. That, in and of
3 itself, should be enough ground to continue the
4 operation of this hospital for years to come.
5 These public hearings -- the ones from Friday, the
6 ones today -- have been compelling testimony to me,
7 stories have doctors and healthcare professionals
8 who bluntly tell us the dangers of remoting primary
9 care, pediatric, neonatal, cardiac, trauma, and
10 mental health services from this community.

11 I am shocked, but I am not surprised,
12 when I hear public comments from attorneys and
13 legislators on the legality of the initial sale,
14 the discussion of who knows who and who knows what,
15 the appearance of fraud, the fact that this is all
16 about money and not people.

17 My personal story is similar to those
18 that have been shared today. I, too, have family
19 members that have been served excellently well at
20 Westlake. Some of my family is undocumented and
21 they have extremely limited options for primary
22 care and mental health services in this community.
23 Westlake welcomed us with open arms.

24 Some of my family are underinsured or not

1 insured at all. Westlake received us with dignity
2 and compassion, and on several occasions, saved our
3 lived, literally saves our lives. For me,
4 personally, as I transition into ICA in coming
5 months, I was comforted by the knowledge that my
6 medical options would be completely covered by
7 Westlake. This was my real safety net option, and
8 I challenge anybody to say that Westlake is not a
9 safety net option for all of us.

10 These medical options for me and my
11 community are now at risk. With the shortage of
12 hospital beds in this area, where are we going to
13 go? Simply put -- and I am going to echo
14 Representative Welch's words here -- if this
15 shameful decision is not reversed, people will die.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: True.

17 MS. ALZAMORAA: In standing here in
18 community, I know we are not without power. We
19 will continue to work in coalition with so many
20 here today and elsewhere. We will continue to
21 raise our voices, lifted by persistence, lifted by
22 resilience in hope and in love. Do the right
23 thing. Our community is not for trade and it is
24 not for sale.

1 I stand with everyone here today to push
2 you to keep Westlake open. Thank you.

3 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: No. 30.

4 MR. POPE: For those of you who don't
5 know me, my name is Frank Pope. It's P-o-p-e, like
6 the Pope in Rome.

7 Can you hear me now?

8 VARIOUS: Yes.

9 MR. POPE: Joann, can you hear me out
10 there?

11 I'll start off by thanking Mayor Serpico
12 and Representative Chris Welch and Representative
13 Kathy Willis for all their help in going forward
14 for us to face this and to fight this. I am
15 opposed of this, and I feel it's my civic duty as a
16 senior citizen and a man who was born and raised in
17 this town -- and my family's been here since 1911,
18 and I was born at Westlake Hospital 74 years ago.

19 My grandmother was one of the first
20 nurse's aides at Westlake.

21 Now, Westlake doesn't just service
22 Melrose Park. It services -- and I'm talking to
23 the people from Pipeline, if you're still here --

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, they left.

1 MR. POPE: They left. But the best is
2 yet to come.

3 Well, as we all know, then, we service
4 Melrose Park, Maywood, Bellwood, parts of River
5 Forest, Hillside, Westchester, Stone Park, North
6 Lake -- that's a lot of communities out there.
7 River Grove.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Bline (ph)
9 Township.

10 THE WITNESS: Bline (ph) Township. And I
11 hear the people out there from Pipeline saying, you
12 know, Well, you know, we looked at it, and we have
13 to close it. But we're going to send you over to
14 West Suburban. And I have a question for that.
15 Why don't you send West Suburban over to us?
16 Because what I see happening here is they're
17 finding all the reasons that they should close
18 Westlake. They're saying, Well, you know, it's
19 almost a hundred years old. Well, that's not going
20 to happen for another eight years. You know, West
21 Suburban was built in 1914. They're 105 years old.
22 Okay? We were built in 1927.

23 So I just want to say that I'm totally
24 against this, and as a lot of people that do know

1 me, I'm a retired investigator with the Circuit
2 Court of Cook County, and I work every district
3 throughout the county, every courthouse at one time
4 or another, and I dealt with fraud and I dealt with
5 non-sense, which I see here, non-sense.

6 And the only question I want to ask them
7 is, okay, you want to close Westlake Hospital?
8 What are you going to put at Westlake Hospital?
9 What are you doing with it? That's the question.
10 But I haven't heard that from them. They just
11 said, Well, you know, we had it two weeks and we
12 realized we made a mistake. Well, that ain't our
13 problem you made a mistake. If you're business
14 people, that's your problem.

15 So, in concluding, I want to convey to
16 Mayor Serpico and assistants who are helping us
17 here, our representatives, that, no charge, I will
18 go on board as an investigator to get to the bottom
19 of this. No charge to the village. It would be my
20 pleasure.

21 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: No. 31. 31?
22 Did 31 leave?

23 Okay. No. 32.

24 MS. MOCK: Good afternoon.

1 VARIOUS: Good afternoon.

2 MS. MOCK: I have a great voice, everyone
3 tells me, because it's loud. That is the history
4 of my work, even at work that I have done at
5 Westlake. I have been a nurse at Westlake for 15
6 years. I was a nurse at West Suburban for five
7 years. I feel sorry for those people in the upper
8 hand when Tenant was here was made them work over
9 at both hospitals. You ought to remember that some
10 of these people that were talking here today,
11 they're working over both hospitals. So they have
12 to represent Pipeline. They can't really speak
13 their true hearts if they have a different feeling
14 of that.

15 West Suburban's OB unit is packed. Most
16 of the time, 16 years ago, we had times where we
17 weren't supposed to send people home within 24
18 hours, and we were trying to figure out how to get
19 the doctors to send them home so that those beds
20 would be available for the ones who just delivered.

21 So there is issues in closing Westlake's
22 OB, in closing different parts of Westlake.
23 Westlake has a full pool down in the basement that
24 is heated, so that helps in the fitness of keeping

1 people healthy.

2 I am a person who got into the health
3 care system elderly. I had to go to a community
4 college. I did not make it to Triton because I
5 didn't live in Triton's community at the time, but
6 I have raised three children pretty much
7 independently, and I know that when I look at the
8 stack at Westlake, we're elderly. We're not the
9 young 20-year-olds and 15-year-olds and 25- or
10 30-year-olds. A lot of us are the 40- and
11 50-year-olds that have a hard time getting a job.
12 We have a lot of associate-degree nurses that,
13 because they're not bachelor approved, they're not
14 going to be able to find another job at MacNeal or
15 Elmhurst or any overly high --

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, but you have
17 got this --

18 THE WITNESS: -- I forget what they're
19 called -- magnet-status hospitals.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But they are the
21 best.

22 THE WITNESS: But --

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: They're
24 (indiscernible).

1 THE WITNESS: -- I will tell you what,
2 our hospital has one -- in OB, we have won
3 excellence awards. We have been certified for many
4 different awards. We have got -- and you know
5 (indiscernible) gynecological procedure award
6 because we, as a team, work as a family. We, as a
7 team, teach. We, as a team, are willing to learn.
8 We may not have certificates that prove it
9 individually but as a collective team, we work hard
10 to serve this community and to show the love to the
11 community that people have here. I don't really
12 want to go back to work at West Suburban because
13 the trip from Westlake to West Suburban is 30 extra
14 minutes for me, and it doesn't matter which route I
15 take. Thank you for your time.

16 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: One second,
17 33. No. 45 submitted written statements of both --
18 and we'll just call (indiscernible). No. 33.

19 THE WITNESS: My name is Tina Valentino.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yay!

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yay, Tina!

22 MS. VALENTINO: V-a-l-e-n-t-i-n-o. I
23 publish "Neighbors" magazine, which circulates in
24 Proviso Township in the western suburbs.

1 I represent the people who aren't here
2 today. I had the luxury of spending the entire
3 afternoon waiting for my number to be called
4 because a lot of people can't. A lot of people
5 have to work. They couldn't come here today to
6 express their outrage. They don't have that
7 luxury. I did.

8 Was I devastated when KiddieLand (ph)
9 closed? Yes.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

11 MS. VALENTINO: Am I sick to my stomach
12 when I see them demolishing Maywood Park Race
13 Track?

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

16 MS. VALENTINO: Parts of our history that
17 we can never recreate? Yes, I'm devastated. But
18 the news of losing a community hospital have forced
19 me to do things that I don't usually do, which,
20 speaking in front of a large group is one of them.
21 And I thought to myself while I was sitting there,
22 does Pipeline really care what we think? Did they
23 expect people like me to get up and say, I oppose
24 this? I'm upset. My stomach is turning at the

1 deception that took place here. Do they care -- do
2 they really care that I was born there? I doubt
3 it. Do they care that my mother's lived on Lake
4 Street -- 24th and Lake for over 30 years, and
5 every several minutes, you can set your watch by
6 the ambulance that comes from the north, the south,
7 the west, and heads speeding down Lake Street to
8 one location: Westlake Hospital.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You're right.

10 MS. VALENTINO: They expected to get up
11 and say things like that. They expected me to get
12 up here today and look at the nurses that cared for
13 my mother most recently and get choked up. They
14 expect people to get choked up. But it doesn't
15 bother them.

16 I look at the nurses that held my
17 mother's hand, that got her through the emergency
18 room, that gave her the mobility I thought she
19 would never have again. That happened here. I
20 wrote about it twice to rally the people that read
21 "Neighbors" magazine, the 20,000 people every month
22 that pick up a copy and count on what I have to say
23 as something important and significant and worth
24 reading and worth fighting for.

1 I don't know if Pipeline expected us to
2 do this, but I think what they didn't expect is
3 that this is a defining moment for the people we
4 have elected. They must have really thought, in
5 the back of their minds in their California offices
6 and their expensive suits that they were just going
7 to roll over Melrose Park and Maywood -- and I'm
8 not black and I'm not brown but I'm just a regular
9 person who lives here, and they must have thought,
10 Wow, we're just going to sneak this by and we're
11 going to get the board to just put the stamp on it
12 and move on.

13 Well, this is a defining moment in Mayor
14 Serpico's 22 years. This is a defining moment in
15 Kathleen Willis's service to the community. This
16 is a defining moment for Chris Welch. They got
17 people out on freezing cold days and rallied them
18 and told everyone -- told the news media, told
19 anyone who would listen that he would fight to keep
20 Westlake open.

21 And so I'm not here for myself. I can't
22 keep my own business open most days. I understand
23 financial struggle. I understand, on a very small
24 level, what Pipeline must be thinking when they

1 want to streamline their business. Well, you know
2 what? It just doesn't work that way.

3 I think they're going to be surprised.
4 Maybe they might look out here from my vantage
5 point and say, Well, they couldn't pack the room.
6 They got a lot of little people, they got a lot of
7 Hispanic people, they have got a lot of black
8 people that just didn't care enough to come out
9 today. Well, you know what? That couldn't be
10 farther from the truth because those people that
11 aren't here voted for Kathleen Willis, they voted
12 for Chris Welch, they voted for Ron Serpico, they
13 know people like Norma, they know Mary, they know
14 Adrian, they know Tamara, they know who lives them
15 the service. They know that lives have been saved
16 at Westlake and lives will be lost without
17 Westlake. I can tell you that for a fact.

18 My best friend is sitting here. She will
19 speak next. Westlake saved her life. There's no
20 "I got calculations." There's no -- there's no
21 math in the world that can explain what it's like
22 to be able to take your worst day, your very worst
23 scariest, anxious day and know that your health was
24 just a few minutes away down the street, that your

1 82-year-old mother would be safe and not scared and
2 cared for, not only expertly, but compassionately.

3 Those are the things you can't put a
4 price tag on. And I'm sorry that Pipeline feels
5 that Westlake's not profitable for them, but as a
6 lifelong parishioner of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, I
7 have to say that maybe Father Giovanni said the
8 most important thing here: This hypocrisy, this
9 fraud, the fact that they thought that they could
10 deceive every one of us, how stupid they must think
11 we are, that is the greatest crime and sin of all,
12 and that's why I took the day off today, to come up
13 here with my quivering voice and say I won't allow
14 it. I'll stand behind anyone who says let's keep
15 Westlake open.

16 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: 34?

17 MS. TINTORI: My name is Dee Tintori,
18 T-i-n-t-o-r-i. I'm not a Melrose Park resident,
19 but I have worked here for almost 50 years. I live
20 in Des Plaines, Illinois. And 16 years ago, I was
21 rushed to Westlake Hospital and almost lost my
22 life. The staff, the doctors, the nurses,
23 everybody gave me the best care that any person
24 would want and any person deserves. Westlake

1 Hospital isn't just a hospital. Everybody there
2 looks out for everyone, not just this community,
3 the surrounding communities, but even me that
4 doesn't live around here. I owe my life to
5 Westlake Hospital, and I'll stand behind anyone and
6 everyone that's going to fight to keep Westlake
7 Hospital open. Westlake saves lives, and we all
8 live here. Thank you, everybody.

9 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: No. 36?

10 MS. BASSETT: My name is Delores Bassett.
11 I've been in Melrose Park since 1957. Westlake
12 took care of my mom when she had Alzheimer's. A-1,
13 can't complain. The exercise center is excellent.
14 I had bariatric surgery, and I can't complain.
15 It's A-1. Anybody that complains, they're out of
16 their mind.

17 MS. BASSETT: I'm 35 and 36.

18 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: So you're 36
19 and 37, so you're only speaking once, though,
20 right?

21 MS. BASSETT: Yeah, yeah. Okay. We
22 won't speak together.

23 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Okay. 38?

24 MR. BASSETT: No. 38? I wish I was --

1 36.

2 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Oh, 37, you're
3 speaking too? Sorry. I'm sorry. Who is speaking?
4 37?

5 MR. BASSETT: What's the difference? I
6 don't like mics. I'm Jack Bassett. I have lived
7 at Melrose Park for 64 years.

8 Can you hear me?

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

10 MR. BASSETT: And I (indiscernible).
11 (Indiscernible) Westlake 17 years. Had a lot of
12 fun in their swimming pool. (Indiscernible).

13 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: 38?

14 MR. BASSETT: And you can get to Westlake
15 quicker than to West Suburban.

16 MR. PARKER: Good evening. Good evening.
17 There we go. My name is Chris Parker. Testing,
18 1-2. Testing.

19 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: It cuts in and
20 out.

21 MR. PARKER: Okay. Gotcha.

22 Chris Parker, P-a-r-k-e-r. I'm actually
23 the president of the Bellwood Chamber of Commerce,
24 and I'm here to simply oppose the closure of

1 Westlake. You know, we have talked to a whole -- I
2 have heard from a whole lot of inspiring stories,
3 but it's very critically important to hear from the
4 business community. The chamber understands good
5 business. This is not good business. Good
6 business means you are upfront and honest. It
7 means you take under consideration the impact of
8 your decisions. It means you don't hide behind
9 buildings and you don't hide behind inequality and
10 misrepresentation.

11 Good business doesn't involve such
12 decisions and transactions impacting 20,000 people,
13 allegedly, overnight. One of our board of
14 directors who have worked for this institution for
15 years in the community service department
16 representing the hundreds of jobs impacted and even
17 greater, 20,000-plus people who are rely on this
18 hospital, we certainly want to make sure that we
19 uphold the work of Dr. Alvarado.

20 The chambers of commerce represents
21 hundreds of local businesses, business community,
22 partners who cares about this community. Our
23 vision is to be Proviso Township's premier provider
24 of business resources and on innovation, and

1 innovation leader of economic growth for
2 sustainable, livable communities.

3 We oppose the closure of this hospital as
4 it goes against us having a thriving, sustainable
5 and livable community. Our business community
6 relies on a good economy. We are here to support
7 the opposition of this closure, and we plan to
8 fight it. Thank you.

9 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: No. 40? No.
10 40? 41? 42?

11 MS. UDONI: Good afternoon, everyone. My
12 name is Cermilina Udoni, U-d-o-n-i. I'm a nurse at
13 the professional office building of Melrose Park --
14 Westlake Hospital in Melrose Park.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible)
16 your mic, please.

17 MS. UDONI: Being right next to Westlake
18 Hospital --

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We can't hear you.

20 MS. UDONI: Being right next to Westlake
21 Hospital are patients referred to us as Westlake
22 dialysis. We have been there for more than 23
23 years. Up to this time, we are currently treating
24 85 patients who we provide dialysis treatment three

1 times a week and some up to four times a week, 363
2 days of the year. We provide care to diverse
3 culture from our neighboring communities, from
4 Bellwood, Maywood, Forest Park, Hillside, Melrose
5 Park, Northlake, and some patients come from
6 Chicago, prefer to come to our dialysis clinic.

7 With Westlake Hospital's closure, it will
8 not just affect our patients receiving dialysis
9 care but their primary caregivers and their
10 families. We partner with the hospital staff from
11 security, emergency services, care coordination,
12 and environmental services to serve our patients
13 and ultimately, our community.

14 I am here to support for Westlake
15 Hospital to remain open, so that's my hope, that
16 professional office building be retained open for
17 patients who seek follow-up care. We have been
18 left in the dark since we got the news from -- on
19 January 29th that Westlake Hospital's owners will
20 be transferred to Pipeline.

21 On February 17th, we just heard it on the
22 news that the hospital is closing. Our patients
23 didn't stop in reaching out to us what is going to
24 happen to us because they know that, when the

1 hospital closes, our dialysis facility will also
2 close. So I do oppose the Westlake Hospital
3 closing. Thank you.

4 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: 43?

5 MR. JOHL: My name is Mike Johl, J-o-h-l.
6 And I'm representing several people in my family
7 who cannot be here today or cannot speak for
8 themselves today for a variety of reasons. Tina,
9 we read you. Thank you very much for everything
10 you do. (Indiscernible). That's why we write.
11 You know?

12 I want to tell you three very quick
13 stories. First is my son. When my son was 18
14 months old, he went to Westlake Hospital with a 105
15 fever. The nursing staff in the emergency room
16 immediately plunged into an ice bath, which I
17 thought was nothing short of barbaric, but it, in
18 fact, saved his life. Were it not for the quick
19 thinking of those nurses and the medical staff on
20 that night almost 40 years ago, a northwest suburb
21 would not have a deputy fire chief today. So proud
22 of my son -- both of them, actually, but him
23 especially. And I think that was one of the things
24 that caused him to get into being a paramedic and

1 go on.

2 Many years later, my wife, who is sifting
3 in the back, back there, was a patient of
4 Dr. Rosenberg, who was chief of staff for a short
5 time at Westlake and was a pulmonary specialist.
6 She called him because she wasn't feeling well, and
7 he said, Come on in, let's take a look and
8 immediately was -- she went into the emergency room
9 with double pneumonia. Spent several days in the
10 ICU. Once again, were it not for the fine work of
11 the medical staff -- I see some of you still
12 here -- thank you so much for what you have done
13 for my family. Were it not for the fact that you
14 did exactly what was supposed to be done and you
15 were there, she might not be sitting in the back
16 right now.

17 Third and final story I have to tell you
18 about is my father, who has passed on, but two
19 years before he passed on -- we lived in Elmwood
20 Park, my father was living with us, he was
21 exhibiting some odd symptoms, some odd signs. I
22 called 9-1-1. Paramedics immediately diagnosed him
23 as having stroke symptoms. They said, we're not
24 going to Gottlieb. The best place for him is

1 Westlake, (indiscernible) and all your colleagues.

2 Were it not for your quick work and the
3 fact that you are, in fact, a stroke center, my
4 father would not have lived out the last two years
5 of his life without irreparable damage, because he
6 was seen and treated quickly, partially because of
7 you guys, partially because the paramedics knew
8 what they were doing.

9 I can only say I am so diabolically
10 opposed to this ridiculous action. I'm a great fan
11 of irony. Again, it must be the nuns.

12 I'm going to read you something from the
13 web page from Pipeline Health: "We aim to be the
14 most trusted community-based healthcare network by
15 providing world-class patient care and expertise no
16 matter where you are." I'm going to add a line to
17 that: "Except Melrose Park."

18 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: No. 44?

19 MS. IGOE: Good afternoon. My name is
20 Anne Igoe, and I serve as the vice president for
21 hospitals for SCIU healthcare, Illinois and
22 Indiana. We're a union of 90,000 healthcare
23 workers, thousands of which serve as child care
24 providers, home care providers, nursing home

1 workers, in-home workers in this area.

2 I also grew up in this area and Westlake
3 is the hospital that my family and I utilized.
4 SCIU Healthcare stands opposed to the closure of
5 Westlake Hospital and the closure of any hospital
6 that serves a community of color, specifically in
7 areas below the poverty -- in which it serves
8 families below the poverty line. 90 percent of the
9 families which utilize Westlake Hospital are
10 eligible for medicaid.

11 Pipeline proposes that members of this
12 community just take a shuttle bus to West
13 Suburban/Oak Park. The in-patient utilization rate
14 for Westlake and for West Suburban are similar, but
15 they're choosing to shut down Westlake and keep
16 West Suburban open. I wonder what the difference
17 between the two hospital populations are.

18 We call on Pipeline -- is it on?

19 We call on Pipeline to live up to that
20 commitment to -- commitment to provide charity care
21 and care to those served by the State's medicaid
22 program. Pipeline claims that the hospital is
23 underutilized and that they will be losing money
24 under the new hospital assessment program. We feel

1 that the 10,000 days of care provided to patients
2 covered under medicaid hardly expresses an
3 underutilized hospital. What it sounds like is
4 that Pipeline just can't make a profit on medicaid
5 and charity care. Pipeline is making a decision to
6 keep one hospital open or two hospitals open and
7 one hospital closed based on their profit margin.

8 SCIU Healthcare is calling on the State
9 to step in and stand up for the community that is
10 served by the hospital. We can't make decisions on
11 keeping a hospital open based only on the
12 opportunity to make a profit. While on paper,
13 47.68 percent of the patients served by this
14 hospital utilize medicaid. What doctors, nurses,
15 and other employees know is that this number is
16 much higher. When you take into consideration the
17 current denial rate for claims, the hospital's
18 serving a much higher medicaid population.

19 Westlake Community Hospital is a safety net and
20 should receive recognition by the State and receive
21 the appropriate level of funding.

22 In 2015, the Illinois Hospital
23 Association lobbied to pass Public Act 099-0154,
24 which amended the Illinois Health Facilities

1 Planning Act to make it easier for hospital
2 operators to close facilities and eliminate
3 services. The bill stripped this review board of
4 the power to block hospital closures and the
5 reduction or elimination of services.

6 Thanks to the Illinois Hospital
7 Association that changes to the Health Facilities
8 Planning Act greedy providers like Pipeline are
9 free to close unprofitable facilities with no
10 public resource.

11 Others have testified today to two
12 things: One is the bill that Representative Willis
13 and others are co-sponsoring, which would reverse
14 this act and allow -- to stop the closure of this
15 hospital. We also called on Attorney General Kwame
16 Raoul to step in. There was fraud involved in this
17 approval to purchase the hospital, there was fraud
18 involved in the call to close this hospital, and
19 our elected officials (indiscernible).

20 Last year, the Illinois Hospital
21 Association ran through changes to the Illinois
22 Hospital Assessment Program, which annually
23 distributes 3.5 billion in medicaid supplemental
24 patients to hospitals. This bill took money from

1 hospitals like Westlake and redistributed it to
2 large non-profit but revenue-heavy hospitals
3 further out in the suburbs. These systems have
4 billions in assets, including multi-billion dollar
5 investment portfolios and should not receive
6 hundreds of millions of dollars in annual medicaid
7 subsidies that are supposed to be provided for
8 safety net hospitals.

9 The purpose of the Hospital Assessment
10 Program is to provide supplemental funding to
11 facilities that care for a disproportionate number
12 of medicaid patients. Representatives of Pipeline
13 stated at the beginning of this that one of their
14 reasons for making the decision to shut down --
15 making their decision to shut down Westlake was the
16 loss of \$4 million. Had this assessment program
17 not been changed, they would still have this \$4
18 million. That \$4 million is still there, and it's
19 going to be redistributed out to other hospitals
20 and people can take a bus, people can take a
21 shuttle, but what will really happen is folks will
22 not get the care they need to survive.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And they'll die
24 before they get there.

1 MS. IGOE: Exactly.

2 This IHA back legislation stripped the
3 regulatory powers of this board and effectively
4 transformed the Hospital Assessment Program from a
5 critical funding stream for struggling safety net
6 hospitals into a piggybank for rich systems.

7 As I stated before -- and we need to be
8 supportive of our representatives who are sticking
9 their neck out for this -- is we need to -- the
10 State has to act to save Westlake Hospital and
11 reverse these policies that value big health system
12 profits over people. We're calling on a hospital
13 review board to stop the closure of the hospital
14 and also, on the General Assembly, to pass the bill
15 sponsored by Representative Willis to ensure that
16 Westlake cannot be closed, and in the future,
17 greater oversight is given to any sale or closure
18 of a hospital. Thank you.

19 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: No. 46?

20 MS. FAUERSO: Hi, everyone. This is the
21 first time I have talked in public so I'm scared.

22 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Can you please
23 state and spell your name.

24 MS. FAUERSO: Yes. My name is Tamara

1 Fauerso, F-a-u-e-r-s-o. I come from another
2 country, but I was born in the USA, and I am new
3 here in Melrose Park, so I am very happy because I
4 didn't know the system here and they gave me that
5 hospital we're talking about, a hospital that I
6 love. I just been there, like, three times, and I
7 don't have a car, and I walk. I live here on 17th
8 Avenue, so when I have to go to the hospital, I
9 walk from this side to the hospital, and I make
10 about 30 minutes walking. So it's like exercise
11 for me. So I didn't know they were going to close
12 it until I read in the paper with my PCP doctor,
13 and I almost faint because how am I going to get
14 there next time I have -- how you say? An
15 emergency or something because I have to walk. One
16 day, it was snowing, so I had to ask for a ride,
17 around I know I'm not supposed to do that, but it
18 was somebody of my age that they know that people
19 from our age, (indiscernible), we're used to take
20 rides. Now, I know we're not supposed to, but I
21 have to hurry up, and I don't have a car. I wait
22 for the bus 303 and forget it, there's no 303. I
23 have to walk and walk and walk, so I hurried up.
24 So please don't close that hospital

1 because then it's going to be very far away from
2 me, and how am I going to walk there? I just
3 bought a bicycle so I'm very happy because, that
4 way, now I can go to the hospital so they cannot
5 take it out, please, because I have a bicycle that
6 now I can go on my bicycle when I have to go to
7 emergency or to see the doctor at Westlake
8 Hospital. So that's all. And I'm new in your
9 community. Thank you. (Speaking Spanish.)

10 Don't take it out from here because it's
11 a nice hospital. (Speaking Spanish.)

12 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: No. 48? 48?
13 49?

14 THE WITNESS: Good evening, everybody.
15 Can you guys hear me?

16 My name is Arti. I'm a nurse case
17 manager at Westlake Hospital. I don't want to bore
18 you guys, but I do kind of want to share my story.
19 I was originally a floor nurse at West Suburban
20 Hospital about seven months ago when my manager had
21 asked me, Would you like to learn case management?
22 And I said, Sure, I'll definitely learn,
23 cross-train a little bit.

24 I ended up coming to Westlake. And I'm

1 going to be very honest with you guys, very raw. I
2 didn't hear the best things about Westlake. Coming
3 from West Sub, although we're a sister hospital, I
4 hope no one's opposed to me saying this, but you
5 know, there's a little bit of back and forth there.
6 West Suburban's a better hospital, you know, the
7 better team and all of that. So I kind of went in
8 a little bit scared. What am I going to expect at
9 Westlake? I had never been there.

10 I started day one at Westlake with my
11 training and am still here, so that should say a
12 lot. The team that I met at Westlake -- I'm in
13 acute rehab. I know that there's some patients
14 actually right here in the room that, you know, we
15 have helped out.

16 On February 16th, I woke up to several
17 messages from nurses saying that we don't have a
18 job in the next few months. There is people in my
19 team who worked at Westlake for over 30 years, who
20 only had this on their resume. They're 60 now.
21 They started when they were 30.

22 I'm 30 years old. I have a bachelor's in
23 public health. I have a bachelor's in nursing. I
24 can go anywhere. I'm not like the nurses there.

1 I'm not. But I don't want to go anywhere. I have
2 colleagues and friends that are off at rush at UIC
3 Northwestern. I don't want to be at those
4 hospitals for a reason. The people that are
5 sitting here today, colleagues, doctors who are
6 fighting for us, you -- it's an incredible
7 community. I don't even live here. I live 35
8 minutes away. I didn't have to come here. Several
9 of the nurses -- people say, What's the point?
10 They're going to close. Don't go.

11 I kid you not, I would fight for this
12 hospital. I could go to several other places, but
13 I choose not to. Westlake, the community of
14 Melrose Park is incredible. You guys have left an
15 impression on me. I just simply don't want to
16 leave Westlake Hospital. We have an amazing rehab
17 team, OB, ER, ICU, med surge, every single one of
18 the nurses, the doctors, the techs, the people down
19 to EVS who clean, we all talk, we all
20 communication. Everyone is so in sync at this
21 hospital where you don't get that at other
22 hospitals.

23 So I appreciate everybody who is in this
24 room. It's moving to see that there's even

1 doctors, nurses, community members who took their
2 time out to come here.

3 So all I can say is, as a nurse, as a
4 very little nurse at Westlake Hospital, we're with
5 you, we're trying to fight, we're trying to stay
6 open, and I'll be there until the end. Thank you
7 guys.

8 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: 50?

9 MS. ALCARAZ: Good evening, everyone. My
10 name is Josefina Alcaraz, A-l-c-a-r-a-z. I stand
11 in front of everyone -- a lot of familiar faces, a
12 lot of our employees at Westlake. I am also a
13 nurse in the acute rehab department. I started
14 there fresh as a new grad. I have been there for
15 almost six years now.

16 The words that I want to say, just like
17 everyone else, we don't want to close Westlake
18 Hospital. Over 600 -- over 600 was the number of
19 employees that were impacted when we first heard
20 the news through an article, through social media,
21 that our hospital was closing. Over two, three,
22 four, 10,000 people are really the effected one,
23 not just (indiscernible) employees because we look
24 to have a job but our patients, our families,

1 everyone that surrounds us here in the Melrose
2 community, even our doctors that are present here
3 today. I just want to say I oppose to the closing
4 of Westlake Hospital. I want to continue my career
5 there. It has helped me grow as a nurse to
6 communicate with other referral sources. I can
7 tell you that we are vital to this community
8 because we take a lot of those patients that the
9 bigger hospitals and bigger-named facilities cannot
10 take and reject due to their insurance, due to
11 their lack of support system. We take the chance
12 on those patients, and we want to continue helping
13 them. It is a very -- it is very self-satisfying
14 to know that we found a discharge plan for that
15 patient. We found a primary care physician that
16 will take the patient's replacement plan.

17 You know, I traveled here just about
18 under an hour. I live out in North Aurora. And I
19 travel every morning, Monday through Friday, to be
20 here to serve the community and to serve our
21 patients. I want to continue seeing that. Thank
22 you.

23 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: 51?

24 MS. ALVARADO: I am Marta Alvarado,

1 M-a-r-t-a, last name, A-l-v-a-r-a-d-o. Although I
2 am an employee at Westlake Hospital, I come as a
3 concerned resident. I have lived in Maywood for 57
4 years. Westlake, from the time that we came into
5 Maywood when we were probably one of only two
6 Latino families in Maywood at that time, has been
7 our hospital. Every single one of my siblings and
8 I have had one-month experiences at Westlake. We
9 have seen everything from the birth of my nieces
10 and nephews to the death of my grandparents. And
11 every time we have been there, Westlake has been
12 like home. And the people who have cared for us
13 have been our family members. They have been the
14 people who have loved us.

15 I told the nurse when my grandma died
16 that it's not through any fault of Westlake's or
17 anything that they did wrong. I said, when my
18 grandma was sick, she said that she wanted us to
19 sing her into heaven with hymns, and the nurse just
20 took us in her arms and she said, Honey, start
21 singing.

22 But it's that kind of care and loving
23 attitude that has marked Westlake as our home, as
24 our home hospital. And it's been like that for

1 many of the people in our community.

2 You have heard all of the individuals who
3 have said that, without Westlake, because they
4 didn't have health insurance, because they were
5 underinsured, that Westlake was the only hospital
6 that would take them, and it is true. I have seen
7 it with other people in my community.

8 You have heard about the wonderful care
9 of our physicians and of our staff and all of that
10 is true. But I think more than anything, the
11 impact of a community -- the impact on those
12 citizens of our community, not just because of
13 healthcare but because of the economic impact that
14 there will be of this community, the drain of
15 intellectual power because now people are going to
16 be going somewhere else to find work. All of that
17 is something that can't be counted, that is not
18 even being studied yet or looked at, and yet, we
19 realize that that is what will happen. The drain
20 even on our educational institutions.

21 We realize that a hospital like Westlake
22 is far more than just a healthcare institution. It
23 is a stabilizing factor in any community, and we need
24 that stabilizing factor when so much of our community,

1 whether it's Melrose Park or Stone Park or
2 Northlake or Maywood, has lost so much. So many of
3 us have struggled over the past years with economic
4 depression and with unemployment and with our
5 population growing older and needing more and more
6 help. And without the stabilizing effect of a
7 community hospital like Westlake, where will they
8 go?

9 I'm going to be retiring soon. I'll be
10 66 in a couple of months, and I think I can walk to
11 Westlake. I could go to the senior program -- I've
12 been looking forward to going to the senior
13 programs at Westlake where they tell me about how
14 to keep healthy, where they do free screenings for
15 me, where they have a birthday party for me when
16 everyone else has forgotten that I have a birthday
17 and I'm getting a year older. I was really looking
18 forward to that.

19 Where will people like me go?

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible).

21 THE WITNESS: So I just oppose the
22 closing of Westlake Hospital. I thank its
23 employees, its staff for the great care that they
24 have taken of our community. I thank them for the

1 love that they have shown and the compassion that
2 they have shown, and I pray that somehow our
3 hospital will be saved.

4 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: 52?

5 MR. MEHTA: Hello, my fellow citizens of
6 Melrose Park. We are here today -- my name is
7 Toshar Mehta from Broadway Medical Center in
8 Broadway (indiscernible) pharmacy right on Lake
9 Street and Broadway Street actually. Right on the
10 corner.

11 Well, we're here from the business
12 community just to understand where Westlake will
13 impact our business, our patients, our community,
14 the people who don't come to us or do come to us.
15 The major problem comes up is where will our
16 immediate emergency patients that need care right
17 now, within the next few minutes, go. If you have
18 to travel 15 minutes, there's no way there will be
19 any survival rates on patients who need immediate
20 care.

21 I think we're taking care of people who
22 are only on a small, immediate level, but when it
23 comes to a community that needs this type of care
24 and a community that is -- we already know that has

1 a lot of problems, we need to improve on the
2 community, not taking away what's available,
3 accessible, and take it from them and say, Forget
4 it, we will take this community and say forget you
5 guys, and that's exactly what these Westlake people
6 are doing.

7 I think we all need to make sure that
8 this community helps us understand that Westlake is
9 a big part of us, it has been. All of our patients
10 go there. They come from there. I mean, if you
11 look at the end result, Broadway Medical Center
12 makes sure that patients are good with everyday
13 chronic problems. When it comes to acute problems,
14 that's the bigger guys, the bigger people that need
15 to take care of these problems, and obviously, when
16 you purchase or you come into this community, it
17 becomes your responsibility. It's a factor that
18 everyone needs to hold on to their own to say I
19 serve the community, it's not only profits.

20 Every one of us hurt in business. No one
21 here is going to say that the last five years have
22 been going so well that I should probably just, you
23 know, I flourished so well. But, instead, everyone
24 hurts in business, but it doesn't mean we just let

1 go of the people of the community here. And this
2 is exactly what they're doing.

3 I think we -- at the end of the day, we
4 all need to demand the State's Attorney, Kwame
5 Raoul, if I'm correct on this, he needs to step up.
6 He needs to step up with our Village of Melrose
7 Park, especially with Mr. White. I think we all
8 need to understand where this whole devastation
9 will come if we don't have a hospital in this
10 community. It's -- again, it's a support from us
11 as Broadway Medical, but more than that, I think we
12 need the support of the village, and I think, if
13 they stay, we all can take the vow that we will
14 make this hospital better, we will make it so that
15 we will all attend this hospital instead of going
16 somewhere else, and hopefully, we can make it
17 profitable. Thank you.

18 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: No. 53? 53?
19 54?

20 MS. VILLEGAS: Buenos Aires. (Speaking
21 Spanish.)

22 (Through interpreter:) Good afternoon.
23 My name is Maria, and I am here today in support of
24 the Melrose Park community opposing the closing of

1 Westlake Hospital. I am a victim and survivor of
2 domestic violence. For this reason, I came to
3 Westlake Hospital to (indiscernible) organization.
4 Liz and the woman in the group received me with
5 open arms. It has been a safe environment for both
6 my children and I.

7 (Speaking Spanish.)

8 (Through interpreter:) It is very
9 important that Westlake does not close its doors
10 for many reasons, aside from helping victims and
11 survivors of domestic violence. Westlake also
12 offers many spaces for the community to be able to
13 provide support and receive support. I do not live
14 in the area, however, I unite to the Melrose Park
15 community and will do anything by hand to be of
16 support against the closing of Westlake Hospital.

17 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: After
18 (indiscernible) we're going to take about a
19 15-minute recess. Recess? No recess?

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Does he need a
21 break or --

22 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: He's okay.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

24 (Indiscernible).

1 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Okay. The
2 next number is 54. 53? Did I call 53? Okay. 54?
3 55? Come on up.

4 MS. BOUCHER: Hello. My name is Angela.
5 I have lived here in Melrose Park for the past
6 seven years. My family, starting from my
7 grandparents, has lived here since my dad was nine
8 years old. Even though I was raised in South
9 Elgin, we would visit here for the holidays. And
10 now, my children are being raised here.

11 My two sons are both ADHD as well as my
12 youngest has been diagnosed with DMG. He gets his
13 medication from Westlake Hospital because it's the
14 only place where we can actually get it because of
15 special circumstances. And the pharmacy there is
16 like the nicest place you could ever go to.

17 As far as I know, everyone is greeted
18 with "hello, my love" by its pharmacists. And when
19 I -- when we have gone to their emergency room,
20 everything is done quickly. You're not waiting
21 hours for something to get done or for someone to
22 even walk in the room to see how you're doing.

23 A couple of times, I had to bring my son
24 in, my oldest, and he was complaining that he was

1 hungry. So they would offer him something to eat,
2 like a sandwich or some chips, just to pass the
3 time.

4 I don't want to see Westlake go. It's,
5 like, the best hospital in the area. And I will
6 strongly protest against it going. That's all I
7 have to say. Thank you.

8 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: No. 56?

9 MR. VALTIERREZ: Good afternoon,
10 everyone. My name is Samuel Valteirrez. I'm from
11 Melrose Park and lived in Melrose Park for the last
12 30 years.

13 I'm here today -- my general purpose
14 about speaking here is to address Pipeline to
15 consider what they're about to do to our
16 communities. I want to ask them a question. Is
17 closing Westlake Hospital really their last option?

18 You see, I have five boys, and two of the
19 youngest ones were born in Westlake Hospital. One
20 was born in 2002 and the other one was born in
21 2010. (Speaking Spanish.)

22 Westlake Hospital has been my family
23 health haven for the last 30 years. (Speaking
24 Spanish.)

1 Westlake has helped my wife, my kids, and
2 I to stay healthy. My wife and I have had several
3 surgeries in the last 30 years there. The doctors,
4 the nurses, and staff have provided excellent
5 service. I actually know one of them. They live a
6 couple of blocks away from the hospital and a
7 couple of blocks from my home. (Speaking Spanish.)

8 My doctor's office is in the professional
9 building. His name is Dr. Kaluha (ph). He has
10 been my doctor since my second son was born 20
11 years ago. (Speaking Spanish.)

12 Well, I can sit here and just keep
13 telling you the many different stories and great
14 experiences I had at Westlake, but I'm not going to
15 do that because it be probably take the whole
16 hearing time here. I will not do that.

17 I'm sure my stories resonate with
18 everybody here today. Westlake Hospital and its
19 staff is dear to our hearts. (Speaking Spanish.)

20 I understand the company that bought
21 Westlake Hospital, Pipeline, has a business to run
22 because Westlake, after all, it is a business.
23 (Speaking Spanish.) But I have a few questions.
24 (Speaking Spanish.) Why are we waiting for this

1 hearing to address the issue? (Speaking Spanish.)
2 Why didn't we involve the community, local
3 organizations, elected officials, employees, in the
4 discussion of what should be done if the balance
5 sheets are not balancing out and if the income
6 statements show no profit?

7 Pipeline, I'm sure you requested an
8 income statement before you made this purchase.

9 Pipeline -- (Speaking Spanish.)

10 We have a lot at stake here, and
11 something is not making sense. Pipeline, why don't
12 you just tell us your ultimate plan for this
13 facility and avoid all the nerve-wracking and
14 life-changing commotion. (Speaking Spanish.)

15 These individuals that sit on the board
16 of directors of Pipeline understand well what is
17 going on. You see, they're not there because
18 they're ignorant. They are there because they have
19 the ability to take all this conflict that is going
20 on right now. They're good at that. (Speaking
21 Spanish.)

22 But you also are there because, as a
23 board, you must make the right decisions for
24 Pipeline. I'm talking to this individual who works

1 there. You sit there because you have to make the
2 right decisions for yourselves. You have to make
3 the right decisions for your families. You have to
4 make the right decisions for the communities you
5 live in, because you contribute to them in one way
6 or another. (Speaking Spanish.)

7 But today, I want to ask you -- I want
8 you also -- I want to ask you also to make a
9 decision that best suits this community because, at
10 the end of the day, you have kids, you have grand
11 kids, you have parents, you have family members
12 that need jobs, and you have family members that
13 need healthcare wherever they may be, wherever you
14 may live, the board of Pipeline. Think of them.
15 Think of your children. Think of your sick
16 relatives and the elderly family members you help,
17 that wherever they may be, a decision like this
18 will be devastating to them just like it's
19 devastating to us in this community. (Speaking
20 Spanish.)

21 I believe that everyone here today is
22 here with an expectancy of saving Westlake.
23 (Speaking Spanish.)

24 We do not want Westlake to close its

1 doors to all these communities. Community. We
2 must fight intelligently and wisely by supporting
3 the efforts currently in front of us by our elected
4 state officials, Katherine Willis, District 7 -- 77
5 and Mr. Chris Welch, District 7. I was getting
6 there. And also our members of Melrose Park -- all
7 the community members of Melrose Park.

8 Because if we unite and collaborate with
9 each other, we can stop this closing. We need
10 Westlake Hospital in our community. Thank you very
11 much. (Speaking Spanish.)

12 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: 57?

13 MS. JONES: Good afternoon, everyone.
14 Can you hear me? Hi. My name is Carmen Jones, and
15 I'm currently an employee at Westlake Hospital. I
16 have been sitting and listening -- I'm sorry; bear
17 with me. I'm little nervous.

18 I have been sitting and thinking, while
19 listening to others speak, wondering what I can
20 possibly say that would make a difference or if my
21 words would have any power behind them at all. I
22 was listening and I just kept asking myself what
23 happened to the morals that I was taught to believe
24 in as a little girl? Integrity, trust, respect,

1 accountability, love, and kindness. Integrity, in
2 keeping your word, your commitment. Being able to
3 trust someone's word should not be so foreign
4 today.

5 Respect for life, no matter race or due
6 to lack of income. Why must the less fortunate
7 always be used in a game of chess and so easily
8 disregarded for rights we are told we have but have
9 yet been shown?

10 Why must we have to fight so hard to make
11 Pipeline keep their word? I don't understand that.

12 One may say it's just business, but lives
13 and livelihoods are at stake. It's larger than
14 business. Are lives worth less in a lower income
15 community? Should their lives be jeopardized due
16 to Pipeline's greed and hidden agendas?

17 Pipeline promised to invest in Westlake a
18 better community hospital. Pipeline wasn't forced
19 to purchase us. If this was their intention -- I'm
20 sorry. Pipeline wasn't forced to purchase us. If
21 their intention wasn't in the best interest of our
22 community, then ask yourself what was their true
23 intention? And if it's not what they spoke and
24 signed on the contract, then that's considered

1 fraud.

2 My daddy would say that tells you
3 something about who they are. I'm asking you to
4 please hold Pipeline accountable in keeping their
5 word and show the community that the less fortunate
6 is not less than and that they matter. Thank you.

7 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: 58?

8 DR. BAKOS: Good evening. I'm Dr. Irene
9 Bakos. I have been on staff at Westlake Hospital
10 for over 25 years. And I was just sitting here and
11 just thinking of three quick points I wanted to
12 make.

13 Number one, my patients at Westlake have
14 been treated by the medical staff and the nursing
15 staff and the whole community of Westlake Hospital
16 so well that I have never had a complaint -- and
17 I'm a surgeon; it's easy to complain to your
18 surgeon about things going on -- I have never had a
19 complaint from any patient in 25 years. And I can
20 tell you honestly, if I had complaint after
21 complaint, I wouldn't be on staff at Westlake
22 Hospital. I'd be going (indiscernible). Number
23 one. So I reiterate all the accolades that
24 everybody is giving about Westlake Hospital. It's

1 absolutely true.

2 Number two, in the last several years, I
3 have been noticing, Jeez, I'm getting all these
4 patients. I'm getting patients from Loyola. Why
5 is Loyola referring to me? Why is Elmhurst
6 referring to me from doctors that are on staff?
7 What's going on around here? Gottlieb. What is
8 happening?

9 Well, what is happening was, Westlake was
10 the only hospital -- and I was one of the few
11 doctors in the area -- that were taking various
12 insurance policies that were not exactly in the
13 private insurance premium insurance that other
14 hospitals wanted. And so I was getting referrals
15 one after another after another, including
16 referrals from insurance companies that are near
17 and dear to the spouse of one of the Pipeline
18 people. So I'm accepting their patients. You
19 know? Okay. Don't get me started.

20 But anyhow, I was very, very pleased, and
21 I have developed patients from the area. We know
22 how the insurance goes. We know what we have to
23 do. We're very happy to take care of the patients.
24 And I couldn't take the patients if I couldn't

1 operate on them. So where do I operate? At
2 Westlake Hospital. And I have had -- even in the
3 last six weeks, I have had a patient that was
4 cancelled the night before her surgery over at
5 Elmhurst because they found out she had an
6 insurance that wasn't up to snuff for them.

7 So it is happening out there. We serve
8 that purpose. We do care in the community. We
9 take these insurance plans. They're crazy
10 insurance plans, but we do take them because I'm
11 going to hold it against a patient because this is
12 the only insurance they could get? Of course not.
13 So that's the second point.

14 And the third and last point is just
15 (indiscernible) the young lady who just spoke, I
16 couldn't have said better. I'm a physician. You
17 know? I think I have some ethics. I think I have
18 some ethical responsibility. I think I have to be
19 transparent with my patients. I think I have to be
20 transparent. I think I have to tell the truth to
21 them. I think I have to kind of open things up and
22 say this is the way I see it. This is my
23 intention. This is my outcome. This is what I
24 expect to do for you.

1 I mean, if I didn't do that, I think I
2 could be sued for malpractice. Is there not some
3 kind of ethical thing in the law community, in the
4 business community that has standards that they
5 have to live by and they have to address? You
6 know? I don't know, but I know that this is the
7 way I must function. This is the way I want to
8 function and --

9 It went off again, but I think Pipeline
10 and the way this whole thing was played out -- and
11 even to this day, I don't know if I'm coming or
12 going at this hospital. It's really crazy. We
13 don't know how to address things. We don't know if
14 we'll see the patients at Westlake or some place
15 else. But I think Pipeline has a responsibility,
16 and they have an ethical responsibility to treat
17 the way they presented themselves responsibly.
18 That's all.

19 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: 59?

20 MS. BIANCHI: Hi. My name is Patty
21 Bianchi. I'm an employee of Westlake, and I'm also
22 a long-time resident of Melrose Park. I didn't
23 have a speech planned. I thought everybody would
24 be done by the time I got off of work, but as a

1 resident in Melrose Park, I noticed my taxes going
2 up because we're building better schools and better
3 parks for the children in the area. But how can
4 you not have healthcare for them? How can you take
5 that away from them?

6 As an employee, I am very upset with
7 Pipeline, having to find out through social media
8 that I will not be having a job. It hurt my
9 feelings very badly. I also think they don't know
10 us well. They need to get to know the community
11 better before they make any decisions. There's
12 people there that should be hiring more doctors
13 than recruiting. And what are they doing? They're
14 just collecting their big salaries, so maybe
15 Pipeline should start looking at these high-price
16 people and helping the community with that money
17 instead of giving to people who just sit on their
18 butts all day. Thank you.

19 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: 60?

20 DR. HUMAYUN: I'm Dr. Hamid Humayun. I'm
21 one of the kidney doctors. I have been at Westlake
22 for over 35 years and have seen the hospital
23 gradually decline. The former owners had no
24 intention to prop up the hospital and they

1 neglected it. Their own intention was to sell the
2 hospital. The Pipeline brought the hospital. They
3 had no intention to keep the hospital open. Within
4 few weeks of buying the hospital, they decided to
5 shut it down. They promised that they would invest
6 in the hospital and they would keep it going for at
7 least two more years, and they lied and they
8 misrepresented and so they should be held
9 responsible. They should not -- they have no
10 intention of keeping the hospital open. They never
11 spoke to the doctors. I mean, they (indiscernible)
12 in different communities. They never came to us
13 and they never said they had enough time to study
14 the finances of the hospital. They knew exactly
15 how much the hospital make the year before and the
16 year before. And it is a lie to say that we lost
17 so many millions because there is something like a
18 foster home (ph). Because every time a hospital or
19 any other health organization, they send the taxes.
20 Whatever losses they have, they have
21 (indiscernible) cost support, and the cost support,
22 if they find that there is some genuine reason, the
23 medicaid reimburses, because the medicaid doesn't
24 want the hospitals and the institutions to close

1 down. It will have a devastating effect on the
2 community.

3 And I am on staff in few of the
4 hospitals. Westlake is as good as any of the
5 hospital in the neighborhood. There is no reason
6 why Westlake cannot remain open, why it cannot
7 function when the other hospitals aren't there.
8 There's a total mismanagement and poor intentions,
9 and they have no intentions to keep it open. And
10 that's why it happened.

11 So if they lied, they have to be held
12 responsible, and we need to bring it up with Raoul
13 -- Kwame, the State attorney. He should get
14 involved. He should really look into it and help
15 and hold people responsible for misrepresenting and
16 making a wrong decision and (indiscernible).

17 So I think -- I think it's very important
18 that we cannot let this go. And besides, there are
19 two other hospitals in the neighborhood. If they
20 are going to (indiscernible) any business for
21 Westlake, the other hospitals, they will not have
22 any respect, they will not have any availability,
23 and then the same doctors who are on staff at
24 Westlake, they're also on the staff at neighboring

1 hospitals.

2 So how could you operate if you don't
3 have availability? So I think it's time to --

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Doctor, can I say
5 something?

6 DR. HUMAYAN: Thank you.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You know what
8 you're going to find (indiscernible).

9 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Sorry, I
10 can't -- sorry -- sorry, we can only have the
11 speaker speaking.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Oh, I thought he
13 was done.

14 DR. HUMAYAN: Thank you. Thank you.

15 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Okay. 61?

16 61? 62?

17 MS. MONTIEL: Good afternoon, everybody.
18 My name is Karen Montiel. I work at Westlake
19 Hospital, and I have worked at Westlake for over 14
20 years now. I'm part of the community services
21 department, and as community services, we have been
22 in this community for many years. You rarely see
23 Elmhurst Hospital. You rarely see Loyola Hospital.
24 You rarely see Rush or any other hospital offering

1 free services in the community.

2 Westlake Hospital has always been here.

3 We were looking forward to working with Pipeline.

4 We thought that they were community driven, that

5 they wanted to keep educated this community.

6 Unfortunately, their plans are very different. We

7 have worked with community-based organizations,

8 with faith-based groups, with local school

9 districts. Regardless of race, age groups,

10 Westlake has always been there. We have worked

11 with local elected officials for community events.

12 We have never said no to our community. We wanted

13 to be here. We want to be here. We want to work.

14 As an employee, I want to work. I want to be

15 productive. I don't want to go into unemployment

16 and just wait for some miracle to happen. I want

17 to work. I don't want to be a burden to the State

18 also.

19 Thank you, everybody, for being here. I

20 know that many other people wanted to be here.

21 They couldn't be here. But I really wanted to

22 thank the doctors. The doctors can go anywhere.

23 They have their practice. And yet, they're here.

24 Thank you. Thank you, everybody.

1 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: 63?

2 MS. GONZALEZ: Good afternoon. My name
3 is Denise Gonzalez, and this is my baby. We are
4 here because we want to give our testimony and
5 being grateful with Westlake Hospital community.
6 When I was only five weeks pregnant, I used to be a
7 home care aid, and I had an accident. I fell on my
8 butt, (indiscernible), and I have a (indiscernible)
9 back injury. So I went there and he was born in
10 the final term of 33 weeks thanks to them. He and
11 I, we are standing here, so that's why I want to
12 say thank you, and I don't want the hospital being
13 closed.

14 And one of the nurses who help us, she
15 was here. She got excited when she saw us. And
16 I'm also a survivor of domestic violence, so thank
17 you so much for all that you have done for us.
18 Thank you so much.

19 ANONYMOUS SPEAKER: (Indiscernible) here
20 with a group of women that get together and
21 Westlake. They provide a safe space for us. They
22 have done that for 18 years, and I'm also a victim
23 of domestic violence, but I escaped with the
24 support of the women that we get here. Sorry.

1 (Indiscernible).

2 But there's a couple of other ones --
3 (indiscernible) to coming. We received the
4 counseling, the knowledge to be (indiscernible),
5 the tools to be able to leave, and hopefully, we're
6 going to bring our kids, the kids get separated by
7 age groups. The kids receive their own counseling,
8 if they witness any kind of violence. They also --
9 Sarah Zen (ph) is the group that meets there, and
10 they're the ones that have used -- let us use their
11 space.

12 But, you know, we have a room for the
13 team. We have a room for the younger kids. We do
14 different activities, and it's safe for us and
15 it's -- a lot of the women in the area, some of
16 them don't drive, you know, for various reasons.
17 They have not been able to get their license. But
18 they help them through this process. A lot of the
19 women walk there.

20 So it's a perfect centralized place where
21 we can meet, have a safe space to get the tools to
22 end domestic violence.

23 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: 64?

24 MS. IOSCO: Good afternoon. My name is

1 Beth Iosco, and I'm a lifelong resident of the
2 Village of Melrose Park. The Iosco family arrived
3 in Melrose Park from Italy, circa 1864. Six
4 generations of our family have called Melrose Park
5 home, with four of those generations being born
6 here. More than a handful of us still live here.
7 I live here, and I work in the village.

8 On September 5th, 1961, I was born at
9 Westlake Hospital, back when they only had one
10 delivery room. My mom loves to tell the story of
11 how the loving nurse patted her and held her hand
12 and told her to wait patiently, they would be
13 clearing the delivery room out very quickly. As
14 you can see, everything turned out well because she
15 did have exemplary care. Westlake still offers the
16 same kind of care.

17 On September 6, 1961, they opened the
18 west wing of Westlake Hospital. My mother was
19 there, yes, five days later, because, in those
20 days, seven days postpartum, most moms were still
21 in the hospital. It's funny how things change.
22 Maybe it's tragic how things change when
23 businessmen tell doctors how -- and in this case
24 where to practice medicine.

1 And so you just don't misunderstand, I'm
2 a catalyst (ph). I'm American. I have nothing
3 against businessmen. I myself have a business
4 degree. I do take issue with men lacking in
5 expertise who decide where medical care should be
6 provided. They need to work at their business not
7 only from a number standpoint but from a
8 stakeholder standpoint. And by "stakeholders," I
9 don't just mean the principals of the corporation
10 and the shareholders, but the people in the
11 community whose need gives them a demand for their
12 business. In this case, it's the patients, the
13 people who live in this community who have relied
14 on Westlake Hospital since 1927.

15 Let me tell you a few things about good
16 old west wing. My parents, who are now in their
17 90s, have had, on more than one occasion, the
18 chance to be admitted to Westlake Hospital.
19 Generally, they end up on 5 West where they know
20 the nurses. Not only do the nurses recognize them,
21 they truly know my parents. They know their
22 ailments. They know their physical needs. But
23 more than that, they know their emotional needs.
24 Not only do the nurses and the allied health

1 personnel provide clinical, crucial health
2 services, but they sit there and hold my parents'
3 hands when they're feeling anxious. They give them
4 emotional support as well.

5 When I leave my parents at Westlake in
6 the evening to go home, I can truly say that I can
7 sleep at night. The nurses there recognize me and
8 my family when they see us out in the community.
9 Westlake truly is a community hospital.

10 Let me just tell you a few other bullet
11 points about Westlake. Their emergency department
12 is a stroke center, the only one in the immediate
13 vicinity. They accept obstetrics patients in the
14 ER. Again, the only one in the immediate vicinity.
15 Also accepting pediatrics patients and Level 1
16 trauma. Did you know that Westlake also has a
17 psychiatric center?

18 As I mentioned earlier, I also worked for
19 the Village of Melrose Park at the fire department,
20 and I hear many of the ambulance calls that come
21 over from the 9-1-1 center. Increasingly, we are
22 getting more and more psychiatric needs.

23 What will we do if Westlake closes?
24 Where will we take those people that need mental

1 health care? Will they go to an already
2 overcrowded facility where medical personnel are
3 already overstretched and overstressed? Will they
4 be forced back out of the hospital just because
5 they're already too many of them going out into
6 society without their needs being met?

7 The closing of Westlake Hospital would
8 necessarily mean fewer emergency departments
9 available to first responders. Closing Westlake
10 would mean paramedics and EMTs would be forced to
11 use only Gottlieb Hospital and Loyola University
12 Medical Center.

13 As I stated, Gottlieb does not have all
14 the capabilities as Westlake, and Loyola is simply
15 too far for certain emergencies. Oftentimes,
16 Gottlieb and Loyola find themselves with so many
17 emergency cases, they are forced to go on bypass,
18 meaning they're not able to accept any more
19 patients in their representative emergency
20 departments.

21 Loyola's distance and its potential to be
22 on bypass, along with Gottlieb's deficiencies,
23 would mean paramedics and EMTs will be forced to
24 travel even farther with their patients. This type

1 of situation would imperil the lives of patients
2 when seconds often mean the difference between life
3 and death, something nobody else seems to think
4 about it.

5 The additional stress on paramedics and
6 EMTs. You know those guys who so obligingly come
7 when you need them, put you in the ambulance,
8 assess your needs, and get you to the hospital as
9 soon as possible? This would be detrimental to
10 their health and well-being also, and consequently,
11 to the care they would be able to provide accident
12 victims, the elderly, and others who are ill.
13 Don't forget: Current Westlake Hospital would be
14 forced to join the ranks of the unemployed.

15 If you remember nothing else, remember
16 that Westlake is true to its name: Westlake
17 Community Hospital. It is truly a member of the
18 community and part of the heart and soul of Melrose
19 Park. I only hope for you that you receive the
20 treatment my parents have received, not only
21 exemplary medical care from Dr. Ashagi (ph) and
22 Rasheed, and my son who received pediatric care
23 from Dr. Saleh, but terrific clinical and emotional
24 care from the nursing staff. They treat them as if

1 they were their own parents and grandparents, and
2 for that, I say thank you, but it doesn't seem
3 nearly enough. Thank you.

4 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: I just want to
5 make sure there's no 65. Is there a 65?

6 Has anybody signed up to speak whose name
7 has not been called? Is there anyone who did not
8 sign up to speak who wishes to speak now?

9 MS. WARD: My name is Anita Ward,
10 A-n-i-t-a, W-a-r-d. I have been a member of --
11 well, of this community for many years. My parents
12 moved here to Maywood when I was six years old. In
13 the third grade, I had a doctor from another
14 hospital misdiagnose me, and my parents, after a
15 week of bad information, rushed me to Westlake
16 where they found that I had an appendicitis that
17 was about to rupture.

18 The doctors at Westlake Hospital, I stand
19 before you 62 years old and say they have got to
20 the problem, they did immediate surgery, but if I
21 had gotten there a little later, I wouldn't be
22 standing before you, because, on the operating
23 table, my appendix ruptured, which meant I had to
24 stay in the hospital for 30 days while they were

1 getting all the infection out of my body.

2 My mom had three small children at home
3 as well. I was the third. I, of course, was the
4 favorite but she did take care of my siblings, and
5 then after that, she would come and spend some time
6 with me. And the times that my parents couldn't be
7 there, the nursing staff was there. I remember
8 them carrying me so carefully after surgery into my
9 bed, and I saw my father, and I said, "I want my
10 dad" and they said, "We've gotcha." And they sure
11 did. They put me so carefully down on that bed
12 because I had so many tubes coming out of my body.

13 Years later, my sister spent another
14 month in the hospital. Years later, my brother.
15 Years later -- I can go on and on and tell you how
16 many times my family spent in the hospital at
17 Westlake, how much care was given to us by the
18 nursing staff and the doctors. The care that they
19 gave at my grandparents' last breath. You know,
20 when they see me collapse on the floor when they
21 are dealing with him, you know, one of them came
22 and sat with me and held my hand as I'm mourning my
23 grandfather's loss.

24 Years later, my son gets sick from

1 appendicitis, and Dr. Saleh -- thank you -- my son
2 is alive today, 32 years old, married, happy,
3 because he didn't have to wait a week for a
4 misdiagnosis, thanks to Dr. Kelly and Dr. Saleh.
5 And I can go on and on and tell you about the
6 wonderful work that these wonderful agents of God
7 do with their hands, with their hearts. And the
8 people -- not only the doctors and nurses, but the
9 staff, right down to the security guards and the
10 people that clean the hospital. You know, these
11 are all people that are impacted by the closure of
12 this hospital.

13 But I say thank you to each and every one
14 of you, and as a member of this community, I say no
15 to the closing of Westlake Hospital, but this is
16 our community hospital, and we cannot go down
17 silently. We would not be doing our civic duty in
18 just letting it go by, as so many things. So I
19 thank you, Westlake employees, for the care that
20 you have given, for the education I have gotten by
21 going to learning cafes, for the blood that's been
22 drawn on me at community outreach things. I thank
23 you for that, and I hope that it can continue to be
24 there. And as a member of this community, I say

1 please do not let Westlake Hospital close. It's
2 our hospital. Thank you.

3 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Is there
4 anybody else who wishes to speak? Well, we're here
5 until 8 p.m. and (indiscernible). So we will stand
6 in recess as we wait for additional speakers. And
7 if no one else wishes to speak, I'm sure that
8 (indiscernible). I'll come back on and we'll close
9 this up. Thank you.

10 (A brief recess was taken.)

11 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Hello. Can I
12 have everyone's attention? We have a speaker, so
13 we're going to go back on the record, if everybody
14 can grab their seats. No. 47.

15 MS. FIGUEROA: Good evening. My name is
16 Liz Figueroa, and I'm an advocate of community
17 (indiscernible), domestic violence organization.
18 We once again join our community partners, our
19 elected officials, and the community in general.
20 In pleading to please keep Westlake Hospital open.
21 (Indiscernible) has been serving the west side of
22 Chicago and its 22 western suburbs for over 35
23 years, and Melrose Park is one of the suburbs that
24 we serve.

1 Westlake has been through different
2 administrations, but we are forever grateful for
3 their ongoing support and respect to our mission.
4 Westlake has been a safe haven for the women,
5 children, and victims of domestic violence that we
6 serve for over 16 years.

7 In Westlake, the staff has always made
8 sure that safety is a priority and also that
9 ongoing quality health is provided at all times.

10 Other women have shared that the quality
11 of healthcare provided at Westlake is unique. The
12 closing of Westlake is detrimental to them and to
13 so many other communities. Why is it so easy to
14 decide on closing Westlake after making promises
15 that it would never happen? Why not have
16 conversations and reach agreements and commitments
17 that will allow us to continue their ongoing
18 efforts to provide quality healthcare to an
19 underserved community, a community that needs this
20 hospital open. Please keep Westlake open. Thank
21 you.

22 And just so all know, these women and
23 children behind me are the women and children --
24 some of the women and children that we serve at

1 Westlake on an ongoing support groups on a weekly
2 basis. So I want to thank them also for coming out
3 to support the opposing of the shutting down of
4 Westlake. Thank you.

5 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Are there any
6 additional speakers? Anybody who --

7 MR. VELAZQUEZ: Hello, everyone. My name
8 is Jorge Velazquez. That's J-o-r-g-e, last name is
9 V as in "Victor" e-l-a-z-q-u-e-z. I'm just coming
10 on behalf of a resident. I live in Berkley, and I
11 volunteer for many organizations like PASO. And
12 one of the things that has been talked about a
13 little bit before was just the fact of the amount
14 of community service that is actually being
15 provided at Westlake Hospital. I have never seen a
16 hospital actually who can actually take the title
17 of community hospital, such as Westlake, and that's
18 simply because of the fact of all the community
19 service that is actually provided from all the
20 things that they actually do. They provide a lot
21 of health fairs. They actually do the health
22 screens of many of the health (indiscernible) that
23 are -- that go through and many of the cities here
24 in Proviso Township. So these are underserved

1 communities. These are low-income communities, and
2 I believe that we need hospitals like Westlake to
3 be informed. They actually -- I have worked with
4 them many, many times because I have been involved
5 with many agencies with regards to seniors and
6 providing information, resources, and they have
7 always invited us, they have always told us about
8 what's going on because they are unselfishly, they
9 provide this information so that we can actually go
10 out to the communities, go to churches, go to
11 different organizations, go to different facilities
12 in order for us to provide information and
13 resources and not necessarily has to be regarding
14 the healthcare that they provide, which is great,
15 but it is regarding information that the committee
16 and our seniors need. So I fully oppose the
17 closing of Westlake Hospital.

18 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Is there
19 anybody else who wishes to speak? Sure. Come on
20 up.

21 MS. GRANGER: Hi. My name is Vera. I
22 was also glad that the doctors always get the
23 medicine from that hospital. They always help my
24 grandson all the time. My grandson used to wear --

1 my grandson wears braces all the time, and my
2 grandson always needs help with that medicine. I
3 used to wear braces when I was younger. I know
4 what (indiscernible) because I went through it the
5 way he went through it. And I always appreciate
6 that hospital, always give him the medicine that he
7 needs. And he needs that medicine really bad. And
8 I am so glad that he can go over there and get that
9 medicine all the time, me and my dog. We always
10 go over there, bring up the papers and everything,
11 just to get the medicine and stuff. I am so -- I'd
12 be happy when it stays open. And I hope it stays
13 open for a very, very long time. And to my
14 grandson graduates high school. That's when I'll
15 be happy.

16 And I hope it stays that way for the rest
17 of the kids, because those kids needs it as much as
18 my grandson does. And I hope it goes that way for
19 a long, long time to help other kids too, because
20 all the kids need all the help that we have. Thank
21 you.

22 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Any additional
23 speakers? Okay. We'll take another -- oh, we have
24 one additional speaker.

1 MR. THURMOND: Hello, everyone.

2 (Indiscernible) to speak with. Personally, I
3 believe that all hospitals were built for a reason,
4 and the fact that this hospital is here, it's
5 necessary. Now, me, myself, I was born at Cook
6 County Hospital in Chicago. I had surgery at six
7 weeks old and the doctor did the surgery to save my
8 life. Otherwise, I probably wouldn't be here now.

9 I can remember on the news not too long
10 ago, on the south side of Chicago, it was a lot of
11 people protesting because there was not a hospital
12 for the needs of that community, and they had to
13 take people far, far away. And these people not
14 only were dying on the way or dying right after
15 they got to where they were taking them to.

16 So, in my mind, from people telling me,
17 even lately, that I'm on this planet earth to help
18 people, and I saw this opportunity today to come
19 out here. I wasn't planning on speaking, but it
20 was wide open, so I figured I would say all
21 hospitals were built for a reason, and the reason
22 that this hospital was built -- I don't think it
23 evaporated just because somebody wants to close it.
24 Yeah, I think it's necessary to -- for the public

1 health and the prosperity of communities to, you
2 know, have hospitals not too far away so that they
3 can save lives. When that changes, I might change
4 my point of view but probably not. Thank you.

5 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Can you say
6 your name?

7 MR. THURMOND: Oh, my name is Jerome
8 Thurmond. Sorry about that.

9 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Can you spell
10 your last name?

11 MR. THURMOND: Spell it?
12 T-h-u-r-m-o-n-d.

13 COURT REPORTER: Sorry, slow down.

14 MR. THURMOND: T-h-u-r-m-o-n-d.

15 COURT REPORTER: Oh, that's your last
16 name?

17 MR. THURMOND: Yeah. First name is
18 Jerome. J-e-r-o-m-e.

19 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Is there
20 anyone else who wishes to speak? Okay. We're
21 going to take another recess around go off the
22 record. We're going to take another recess.

23 (A brief recess was taken.)

24 MS. FENSKE: Hi. My name is Mary Fenske,

1 and I recently retired from West Suburban Hospital
2 as a social worker. I worked there for 19 years.
3 I also was born at Westlake Hospital, and I think
4 it's a shame that Pipeline had the nerve and was so
5 lying and unethical about saying they were going to
6 keep (indiscernible), and in less than two weeks,
7 decided they were going to just drop the bomb on us
8 (indiscernible).

9 I go to Westlake Hospital twice a week
10 every week, participate in their health program and
11 their exercise program, and I think it's a fabulous
12 program. As an older person, I'm not that thrilled
13 with places like LA Fitness and all the Spandex and
14 excitement and money. And I really love the
15 services that are available at Westlake. It's a
16 clean and really nice-looking hospital. My
17 mother's had multiple surgeries there, and I think
18 it's just a shame that someone is trying to close
19 this instead of investing in it.

20 Also, it has a psychiatric unit and an OB
21 unit, which is actually not that available in this
22 area. Gottlieb Hospital, I do think that they have
23 a senior psychiatric service but nothing for
24 normal-aged people, and I don't believe that Loyola

1 has anything but day programs. So even looking at
2 West Suburban, I used Westlake Hospital all the
3 time for people who needed inpatient psychiatric
4 services. Okay. I guess that's all.

5 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Thank you.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you for
7 being here for so late.

8 MS. FENSKE: I'm going back to my house,
9 but I spent the whole day at the hospital with my
10 mother, who just broke her hip.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: At Westlake?

12 MS. FENSKE: (Indiscernible).

13 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: We're going to
14 go back off the record for about 15 to 20 minutes.

15 (A brief recess was taken.)

16 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: We're going to
17 go back on the record. Next up is No. 70. And you
18 need to state and spell your name for the court
19 reporter.

20 MS. FALCONE: My name is Anna Marie
21 Falcone. A-n-n-a, capital M-a-r-i-e. Falcone, F
22 as in "Frankie" a-l-c-o-n-e.

23 I would just like to start in saying that
24 I'm an employee of Westlake Hospital since the

1 Westlake was built in 1983. I had two children
2 born there. I have had six grandchildren born
3 there. Dr. Saleh, who was my pediatrician when my
4 children were little, and now they're two of my
5 daughters' pediatricians for their children. They
6 absolutely adore him, as did I. They're
7 heartbroken that something might happen.

8 I also have many other family members.
9 My grandfather, way back in 1982 before I had
10 worked there, my mother has been there, brothers,
11 sister-in-laws -- I have a very large family. They
12 just all come to Westlake from all different areas.

13 We're devastated if this does happen
14 because not only will 800 employees lose their
15 jobs, I'll lose my building, my doctors. It's more
16 than just the buildings. I have made lifelong
17 friends. The doctors are like family. I fear many
18 of the doctors will retire. And it's hard to find
19 a new doctor if you have been going to someone for
20 40 years. You know them, they know you, you trust
21 them. And we're fighting tooth and nail and not
22 giving up. So I'm here after my 12-hour shift of a
23 crazy, crazy day, but here I am and thank you for
24 listening.

1 HEARING OFFICER MITCHELL: Thank you.

2 Is there anyone who wishes to testify
3 that has not had an opportunity to do so?

4 This project is tentatively scheduled for
5 consideration at the board's April 30th, 2019,
6 meeting. The meeting will be held at the
7 Bolingbrook Golf Club located at 2001 Rodeo Drive,
8 Bolingbrook, Illinois. Please refer to the HFSRB
9 website at www.HFSRB.illinois.gov for more details
10 and possible agenda changes.

11 I ask that you please prepare to take
12 note of the following dates and times. The
13 Sav-More second group (ph) will be posted online at
14 www.HFSRB.illinois.gov on April 16th, 2019.

15 Written comments and written responses
16 should be sent to the following address: Illinois
17 Health Facilities and Services Review Board,
18 Attention: Courtney Avery, A-v-e-r-y,
19 Administrator, 525 West Jefferson Street, Second
20 Floor, Springfield, Illinois 62761.

21 Are there any questions?

22 Hearing that there are no additional
23 questions or comments, I deem this public hearing
24 adjourned. Again, thank you for your

1 participation.

2 (At 8:13 p.m., the above hearing
3 concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE OF TRANSCRIBER

I, Bobbi J. Fisher, do hereby certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and correct record of the recorded proceedings; that said proceedings were transcribed to the best of my ability from the audio recording and supporting information; and that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this case, and I have no interest, financial or otherwise, in its outcome.



Bobbi J. Fisher, NCRA Registered Professional
Reporter/Transcriber
March 21, 2019

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

A			
a-1	63:22, 64:11,	94:22, 98:10,	13:24, 31:9,
43:1, 120:12,	64:19, 77:5,	104:16, 105:6	33:21, 33:23,
120:15	87:4, 87:5,	accessible	35:8, 65:15,
a-l-c-a-r-a-z	87:8, 88:16,	5:5, 143:3	104:17, 129:23,
137:10	92:20, 94:19,	accessive	130:1, 130:8,
a-l-c-o-n-e	94:21, 97:21,	9:23	130:14, 132:10
180:22	106:17, 107:16,	accident	action
a-l-v-a-r-a-d-o	116:20, 122:22,	162:7, 168:11	102:18, 104:13,
139:1	126:18, 133:5,	accolades	104:21, 106:9,
a-n-d-r-e	133:10, 134:20,	153:23	127:10
58:8	135:2, 138:17,	accommodate	activist
a-n-i-t-a	140:8, 141:13,	45:7, 54:12,	106:7
169:10	145:18, 147:14,	73:13	activities
a-n-n-a	147:15, 153:3,	accomplish	30:14, 68:17,
102:16, 180:21	153:18, 153:24,	77:2	163:14
a-r-i	165:15, 166:11,	accomplishment	activity
28:15	168:4, 169:17,	53:20	46:16, 72:2
a-v-e-r-y	171:5, 174:12,	accordance	actually
182:18	175:7, 178:8,	1:9, 3:22	45:2, 61:8,
ability	179:5, 180:14	according	61:24, 63:5,
20:10, 22:4,	above	9:24, 14:21,	69:5, 70:20,
72:13, 80:24,	47:11, 183:2	49:18, 51:18	79:11, 121:22,
149:19, 184:7	absolute	account	125:22, 135:14,
able	100:13	50:3	142:9, 146:14,
42:16, 50:24,	absolutely	accountability	148:5, 174:14,
73:3, 73:8,	154:1, 181:6	5:21, 152:1	174:16, 174:19,
74:4, 79:11,	absorbed	accountable	174:20, 174:21,
96:22, 113:14,	44:20	100:1, 153:4	175:3, 175:9,
118:22, 145:12,	absorbs	accuracy	179:21
152:2, 163:5,	82:19	24:6	acute
163:17, 167:18,	abuse	achieve	4:2, 4:5,
168:11	19:15	39:12, 72:22	21:11, 75:7,
about	academic	achieved	82:13, 82:15,
3:4, 7:9, 8:5,	85:15	26:6	96:10, 135:13,
11:5, 17:20,	accept	acquired	137:13, 143:13
25:17, 27:13,	47:7, 50:5,	41:23, 65:21,	adapt
29:6, 31:24,	166:13, 167:18	67:24	72:20
32:16, 36:17,	accepting	acquisition	add
42:7, 47:24,	154:18, 166:15	48:7, 72:2	37:5, 48:1,
48:2, 48:13,	accepts	across	66:3, 127:16
48:14, 49:17,	46:4	9:7, 14:3,	addicted
56:10, 58:10,	access	20:19, 71:24,	83:11
58:22, 59:2,	9:21, 14:18,	72:16, 106:20,	addition
59:22, 60:17,	20:14, 29:9,	106:22	26:15
62:20, 63:16,	42:17, 46:24,	act	additional
63:17, 63:19,	55:18, 55:23,	1:10, 3:15,	5:2, 70:18,
	74:22, 75:6,	3:23, 4:11,	77:13, 168:5,
	77:6, 80:9,	5:21, 9:4, 10:4,	172:6, 174:6,

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>176:22, 176:24, 182:22 additionally 10:2, 14:23, 20:16, 78:17, 78:20 address 33:16, 102:20, 147:14, 149:1, 156:5, 156:13, 182:16 addressed 48:24 adequately 26:17 adhd 146:11 adjourned 182:24 adm 3:24 administration 26:11 administrations 173:2 administrative 34:8, 34:15 administrator 3:12, 182:19 admit 37:14 admitted 26:3, 165:18 adopting 30:19 adore 181:6 adrian 118:14 adults 87:21 advanced 8:15, 82:5 advances 13:11, 75:10, 76:21 adverse 20:6</p>	<p>adversely 20:10, 45:4 advocate 72:5, 172:16 affect 102:21, 124:8 affected 88:17 affirmed 35:6 affirming 34:1 afflicted 22:14 afford 4:12, 23:4, 83:7, 105:13 affordable 9:4, 13:24, 99:18, 104:17 affording 72:12 aforementioned 24:7 after 37:5, 41:22, 67:7, 67:17, 67:19, 69:11, 69:14, 87:7, 97:24, 145:17, 148:22, 153:20, 154:15, 169:14, 170:5, 170:8, 173:14, 177:14, 181:22 afternoon 3:3, 3:5, 7:20, 7:21, 12:23, 12:24, 13:5, 17:5, 18:14, 32:9, 36:14, 57:24, 58:1, 66:7, 66:8, 71:12, 76:7, 79:14, 85:13, 101:14, 106:6, 111:24, 112:1, 115:3, 123:11,</p>	<p>127:19, 144:22, 147:9, 151:13, 160:17, 162:2, 163:24 again 17:2, 25:2, 25:3, 32:8, 40:13, 51:10, 57:9, 65:8, 70:17, 116:19, 126:10, 127:11, 144:10, 156:9, 166:14, 172:18, 182:24 against 28:20, 28:21, 52:21, 70:6, 97:18, 104:21, 106:16, 110:24, 123:4, 145:16, 147:6, 155:11, 165:3 age 22:17, 37:14, 133:18, 133:19, 161:9, 163:7 agencies 175:5 agency 17:7, 17:20 agenda 182:10 agendas 152:16 agents 171:6 ages 43:22, 82:18 aging 25:21 ago 8:10, 9:15, 13:8, 14:10, 19:6, 27:11, 63:1, 63:4, 87:3, 100:17, 109:18, 112:16, 119:20, 125:20,</p>	<p>134:20, 148:11, 177:10 agree 33:10 agreement 32:14 agreements 173:16 aid 20:13, 162:7 aides 109:20 ailment 59:18 ailments 165:22 aim 127:13 ain't 111:12 aires 100:7, 100:8, 144:20 airport 44:12 alcaraz 137:9, 137:10 alcoholism 22:15 alert 91:7 alive 171:2 allegations 4:14 allegedly 122:13 alleging 28:21 allied 165:24 allow 6:3, 10:23, 15:12, 28:5, 119:13, 130:14, 173:17 allowed 33:6, 70:17,</p>
--	--	---	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>76:13 allowing 73:13 allows 59:6, 59:15 almost 36:17, 37:12, 82:16, 89:14, 110:19, 119:19, 119:21, 125:20, 133:13, 137:15 alone 56:12, 103:17 along 31:24, 66:18, 97:14, 99:11, 167:22 alongside 67:1, 106:12 already 29:18, 30:21, 50:16, 78:13, 99:8, 105:16, 106:17, 142:24, 167:1, 167:3, 167:5 also 8:22, 11:9, 13:18, 15:20, 16:20, 17:8, 21:1, 21:8, 34:21, 38:23, 45:19, 48:5, 48:9, 50:8, 58:18, 59:6, 60:7, 65:13, 68:9, 68:12, 68:18, 72:10, 75:2, 77:17, 78:12, 80:19, 81:17, 82:2, 82:6, 82:12, 92:17, 93:6, 93:10, 94:5, 94:18, 94:20, 94:24, 98:11, 102:5, 103:8, 104:11, 125:1,</p>	<p>128:2, 130:15, 132:14, 137:12, 145:11, 149:22, 150:8, 151:6, 156:21, 157:9, 159:24, 161:18, 162:16, 162:22, 163:8, 166:15, 166:16, 166:18, 168:10, 173:8, 174:2, 175:22, 179:3, 179:20, 181:8 although 75:4, 135:3, 139:1 altogether 99:7 alvarado 122:19, 138:24 alvarez 94:24 always 19:20, 26:11, 75:15, 82:16, 102:2, 102:4, 152:7, 161:2, 161:10, 173:7, 175:7, 175:22, 175:23, 176:2, 176:5, 176:6, 176:9 almazoraa 106:6, 106:7, 108:17 alzheimer's 120:12 amazing 95:22, 136:16 ambulance 58:21, 59:2, 59:10, 61:13, 82:20, 116:6, 166:20, 168:7 ambulances 59:10, 82:24 ambulatory 9:1, 13:21,</p>	<p>16:13, 32:5, 72:10, 74:16, 75:7 ameda 72:6 amended 129:24 amendments 31:8 american 43:21, 82:1, 165:2 americans 49:13 amidst 76:17 among 9:16, 14:12 amount 174:13 analysis 105:11 analyst 3:13 anchor 105:15 anchors 16:11 ancillary 54:11 andre 58:7, 62:9 anesthesia 37:18, 54:18 angela 146:4 angiogram 65:3 angiograms 65:4 anita 169:9 ann 2:5, 3:12, 7:2 anna 102:16, 180:20 anne 127:20</p>	<p>annual 131:6 annually 130:22 anoint 99:1 anonymous 162:19 another 12:1, 20:10, 26:19, 27:5, 59:12, 64:9, 67:19, 72:8, 74:15, 76:17, 85:8, 110:20, 111:4, 113:14, 133:1, 150:6, 154:15, 169:13, 170:13, 176:23, 178:21, 178:22 answer 17:6, 57:14, 82:7 answered 43:24 answering 90:4 anticipated 5:8, 15:2 anticipating 10:5 anxious 118:23, 166:3 any 7:16, 12:19, 21:3, 28:6, 30:5, 33:19, 33:20, 34:24, 38:7, 41:3, 54:7, 78:23, 104:8, 104:9, 113:15, 119:23, 119:24, 128:5, 132:17, 139:16, 140:23, 142:19, 151:21, 153:19, 157:11, 158:19, 159:4, 159:20,</p>
---	--	---	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>159:22, 160:24, 163:8, 167:18, 174:5, 176:22, 182:21, 184:9 anybody 108:8, 120:15, 169:6, 172:4, 174:6, 175:19 anyhow 154:20 anyone 117:19, 119:14, 120:5, 169:7, 178:20, 182:2 anything 10:19, 38:9, 51:22, 83:23, 139:17, 140:10, 145:15, 180:1 anyway 25:4, 52:23 anywhere 59:5, 135:24, 136:1, 161:22 apologize 12:6 appear 34:21 appearance 7:4, 107:15 appendicitis 100:18, 169:16, 171:1 appendix 169:23 applicants 4:5 application 4:1, 30:4, 30:8, 30:16, 31:12, 31:17, 31:21, 33:20, 34:3, 34:4, 35:5, 35:9, 35:11, 35:12, 35:17, 35:18, 35:19, 35:22, 68:5, 68:6,</p>	<p>68:19 applications 29:3 applied 30:2 applying 80:19 appreciate 64:21, 136:23, 176:5 appreciated 81:8 approach 6:18, 74:10 appropriate 46:20, 75:6, 129:21 appropriately 48:24 appropriation 92:19 approval 70:4, 130:17 approve 24:4, 31:10 approved 34:5, 113:13 approximately 27:22, 51:19 april 182:5, 182:14 area 9:17, 9:22, 14:13, 14:19, 16:20, 17:21, 20:8, 20:20, 21:4, 21:6, 22:18, 22:24, 23:4, 23:24, 30:12, 37:12, 37:23, 37:24, 39:24, 49:4, 54:7, 56:11, 60:13, 68:15, 76:11, 78:18, 90:13, 91:5, 91:15, 92:23, 101:4, 102:10,</p>	<p>102:11, 108:12, 128:1, 128:2, 145:14, 147:5, 154:11, 154:21, 157:3, 163:15, 179:22 areas 38:13, 128:7, 181:12 aren't 27:3, 115:1, 118:11, 159:7 ari 28:14, 41:7 ark 16:4 arm 59:23, 60:3 arms 107:23, 139:20, 145:5 around 27:9, 37:8, 49:24, 51:11, 52:19, 88:22, 97:13, 99:4, 105:3, 120:4, 133:17, 154:7, 178:21 arranging 78:21 arrivals 104:14 arrived 164:2 arteries 48:14 arti 134:16 article 84:2, 137:20 ashagi 168:21 aside 104:22, 145:10 ask 6:12, 12:16, 17:2, 18:6,</p>	<p>62:10, 65:18, 68:3, 81:6, 101:18, 102:8, 111:6, 133:16, 147:16, 150:7, 150:8, 152:22, 182:11 asked 51:23, 90:6, 134:21 asking 70:1, 70:10, 70:12, 71:5, 98:20, 151:22, 153:3 aspire 25:10 assembly 10:3, 14:24, 132:14 assertions 4:15 assess 168:8 assessment 10:4, 15:1, 103:10, 128:24, 130:22, 131:9, 131:16, 132:4 asset 32:24 assets 131:4 assist 78:12 assistants 111:16 associate-degree 113:12 association 82:1, 129:23, 130:7, 130:21 assure 64:14 assured 54:1 attack 51:3</p>
---	--	---	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>attempt 42:13</p> <p>attend 36:7, 144:15</p> <p>attendance 5:8</p> <p>attended 19:6</p> <p>attending 3:14</p> <p>attendings 54:9</p> <p>attention 3:4, 37:20, 61:16, 172:12, 182:18</p> <p>attitude 139:23</p> <p>attorney 21:13, 24:4, 48:10, 65:14, 65:19, 66:2, 70:13, 130:15, 144:4, 159:13</p> <p>attorneys 107:12</p> <p>audience 95:1</p> <p>audio 184:7</p> <p>aurora 72:5, 138:18</p> <p>austin 57:13</p> <p>authority 16:3, 97:15</p> <p>authorization 6:2, 6:3</p> <p>autism 17:7, 17:9, 17:13, 17:15, 17:23, 25:20</p> <p>availability 159:22, 160:3</p> <p>available 6:9, 28:8, 38:12, 47:1, 49:6, 60:11,</p>	<p>112:20, 143:2, 167:9, 179:15, 179:21</p> <p>avenue 57:13, 133:8</p> <p>average 82:21, 82:22</p> <p>avery 3:11, 5:9, 7:1, 182:18</p> <p>avoid 30:5, 101:6, 149:13</p> <p>award 114:5</p> <p>awarded 53:17, 73:24</p> <p>awards 114:3, 114:4</p> <p>aware 53:7</p> <p>awareness 17:7</p> <p>away 22:1, 23:5, 32:4, 33:9, 33:14, 44:9, 47:5, 50:24, 59:2, 59:15, 61:18, 77:20, 77:24, 81:22, 82:24, 84:16, 85:21, 87:22, 88:1, 91:6, 93:19, 97:8, 99:13, 118:24, 134:1, 136:8, 143:2, 148:6, 157:5, 177:13, 178:2</p> <p>awesome 26:11</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">B</p> <hr/> <p>b) (2 35:16</p> <p>b-a-k-e-r 85:14</p>	<p>b-e-a-u 89:22</p> <p>b-i-z-z-o-t-t-o 97:5</p> <p>babies 37:13, 37:19, 37:21, 38:1, 38:5, 38:19, 55:17, 55:19, 56:24, 57:11, 57:13, 91:1, 96:5, 98:18</p> <p>baby 37:15, 90:18, 93:16, 162:3</p> <p>bachelor 113:13</p> <p>bachelor's 135:22, 135:23</p> <p>back 7:2, 7:6, 7:14, 11:8, 13:3, 27:11, 59:7, 59:11, 59:13, 59:15, 61:14, 69:17, 70:9, 71:9, 83:15, 90:11, 96:12, 114:12, 117:5, 126:3, 126:15, 132:2, 135:5, 162:9, 164:9, 167:4, 172:8, 172:13, 180:8, 180:14, 180:17, 181:9</p> <p>back-street 64:13</p> <p>backseat 61:23</p> <p>backup 55:2</p> <p>backwards 51:23</p> <p>bad 169:15, 176:7</p> <p>badly 157:9</p>	<p>baker 85:14</p> <p>bakos 153:8, 153:9</p> <p>balance 149:4</p> <p>balancing 149:5</p> <p>baptist 25:6</p> <p>bar 63:22</p> <p>barbaric 125:17</p> <p>bariatric 66:5, 73:16, 120:14</p> <p>barn 59:10</p> <p>barriers 55:23, 85:9</p> <p>based 32:13, 78:8, 103:2, 129:7, 129:11</p> <p>basement 112:23</p> <p>basis 34:2, 34:10, 34:17, 35:10, 45:4, 56:14, 58:23, 58:24, 65:21, 174:2</p> <p>bassett 120:10, 120:17, 120:21, 120:24, 121:5, 121:6, 121:10, 121:14</p> <p>bath 125:16</p> <p>beacon 23:22</p> <p>bear 22:7, 151:16</p> <p>beat 91:4</p> <p>beautiful 90:22, 99:6</p>
--	---	--	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>became 89:24 beck 84:22 become 20:22, 25:21, 26:2, 53:9, 57:6, 89:13 becomes 143:17 bed 4:5, 20:21, 22:21, 170:9, 170:11 beds 9:21, 9:23, 9:24, 10:15, 14:19, 14:20, 15:11, 38:7, 38:10, 38:12, 82:14, 82:16, 108:12, 112:19 been 3:16, 17:11, 24:19, 24:20, 24:22, 25:4, 25:7, 26:4, 26:11, 28:1, 29:6, 31:19, 35:19, 36:16, 37:11, 37:21, 39:24, 40:22, 41:13, 47:24, 50:9, 50:15, 53:22, 58:13, 60:6, 62:2, 63:20, 65:4, 65:9, 76:10, 76:21, 80:1, 81:14, 81:15, 84:8, 85:18, 87:8, 98:1, 99:3, 99:8, 100:12, 101:23, 106:17, 107:6, 107:18, 107:19, 109:17, 112:5, 114:3, 118:15,</p>	<p>120:11, 123:22, 124:17, 131:17, 133:6, 135:9, 137:14, 139:6, 139:11, 139:13, 139:24, 141:12, 143:9, 143:22, 145:5, 146:12, 147:22, 148:10, 151:16, 151:18, 152:9, 153:9, 153:14, 154:3, 157:21, 160:21, 161:2, 161:10, 163:17, 169:7, 169:10, 171:21, 172:21, 173:1, 173:4, 174:12, 175:4, 181:10, 181:19 before 1:3, 7:14, 32:11, 32:13, 34:21, 36:8, 67:23, 69:15, 70:17, 76:19, 92:18, 92:19, 105:10, 106:3, 126:19, 131:24, 132:7, 149:8, 155:4, 157:11, 158:15, 158:16, 169:19, 169:22, 174:13, 181:9 begging 98:17 begin 3:4, 4:23, 7:18, 36:9 beginning 6:20, 13:2, 131:13 beginnings 76:15 behalf 3:13, 19:13, 65:22, 79:18, 95:23, 174:10</p>	<p>behavior 16:6, 18:2 behavioral 82:14, 87:1, 87:13 behaviorial 77:11 behind 119:14, 120:5, 122:8, 122:9, 151:21, 173:23 being 8:17, 9:8, 10:12, 14:4, 15:9, 17:10, 39:9, 45:3, 51:23, 59:17, 60:5, 63:21, 64:12, 79:12, 88:14, 96:11, 123:17, 123:20, 125:24, 140:18, 146:10, 152:2, 161:19, 162:5, 162:12, 164:5, 167:6, 174:14, 180:7 believe 48:7, 48:24, 56:19, 74:18, 87:18, 90:23, 99:6, 99:14, 150:21, 151:23, 175:2, 177:3, 179:24 believed 72:22 bellwood 25:13, 25:18, 44:14, 51:21, 66:14, 110:4, 121:23, 124:4 belly 51:2 belong 36:15 below 128:7, 128:8</p>	<p>benefit 6:21, 29:16, 29:23, 29:24, 30:11, 32:18, 68:14, 95:21, 98:5 berkley 174:10 besides 159:18 best 73:1, 74:10, 84:12, 90:13, 94:8, 110:1, 113:21, 118:18, 119:23, 126:24, 135:2, 147:5, 150:9, 152:21, 184:6 beth 164:1 better 9:2, 13:21, 23:17, 29:15, 39:20, 72:13, 76:22, 76:24, 87:16, 88:8, 135:6, 135:7, 144:14, 152:18, 155:16, 157:2, 157:11 betty 106:7 between 31:20, 82:17, 85:10, 103:19, 105:17, 128:17, 168:2 beyond 77:17 bianchi 156:20, 156:21 biased 48:7 bicycle 134:3, 134:5, 134:6 bidder 85:3</p>
--	--	---	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>big 42:2, 44:2, 132:11, 143:9, 157:14 bigger 42:17, 138:9, 143:14 bigger-named 138:9 biggest 41:24, 87:23 bigotry 23:16 bilingual 54:11 bill 94:10, 130:3, 130:12, 130:24, 132:14 billboards 48:16 billion 27:19, 27:20, 130:23 billions 131:4 bills 60:22, 102:5 binds 105:7 birth 37:13, 139:9 birthday 62:5, 141:15, 141:16 birthing 74:6 bit 36:6, 43:7, 134:23, 135:5, 135:8, 174:13 bizzotto 97:4, 97:5 bj 71:14 black 36:19, 53:1, 55:10, 81:19,</p>	<p>84:20, 103:6, 103:8, 105:14, 117:8, 118:7 blacks 22:10 bless 100:5 blessed 100:19 blind 106:23 bline 110:8, 110:10 block 91:6, 130:4 blocks 37:24, 39:19, 97:8, 148:6, 148:7 blood 22:13, 48:19, 49:7, 66:20, 95:7, 171:21 bluntly 107:8 board 1:2, 2:3, 3:10, 4:10, 5:10, 9:3, 10:22, 13:23, 15:12, 16:24, 19:23, 21:12, 24:2, 28:19, 29:4, 29:14, 29:17, 30:2, 30:5, 31:8, 31:9, 33:16, 33:18, 33:19, 34:2, 34:6, 34:9, 34:13, 34:16, 34:19, 34:21, 34:22, 34:24, 35:16, 35:21, 48:9, 54:1, 65:12, 65:18, 66:1, 66:17, 67:23, 68:3, 69:1, 69:22, 69:23,</p>	<p>70:1, 70:10, 70:11, 70:13, 70:16, 70:17, 71:5, 79:11, 81:6, 92:15, 92:19, 94:8, 99:9, 106:8, 111:18, 117:11, 122:13, 130:3, 132:3, 132:13, 149:15, 149:23, 150:14, 182:17 board's 5:17, 29:23, 70:3, 182:5 board-certified 46:9, 55:1 bobbi 1:24, 184:3, 184:15 body 8:15, 13:11, 170:1, 170:12 bolingbrook 182:7, 182:8 bomb 179:7 boo 17:1, 75:13, 79:6 books 63:23 bore 134:17 born 66:22, 98:18, 101:21, 109:16, 109:18, 116:2, 133:2, 147:19, 147:20, 148:10, 162:9, 164:5, 164:8, 177:5, 179:3, 181:2 boss 90:9 both 60:14, 72:19, 73:9, 75:6,</p>	<p>82:23, 103:23, 112:9, 112:11, 114:17, 125:22, 145:5, 146:11 bother 116:15 bottom 7:9, 57:2, 111:18 boucher 146:4 bought 69:16, 134:3, 148:20 boys 90:22, 147:18 braces 176:1, 176:3 bradley 43:12 braggadocios 69:6 brain 48:15, 48:16, 48:17, 48:20 break 145:21 breath 96:5, 170:19 bricks 21:22 brief 12:14, 172:10, 178:23, 180:15 briefly 106:11 bring 146:23, 159:12, 163:6, 176:10 broad 32:3, 33:16, 44:3, 45:15 broadway 142:7, 142:8, 142:9, 143:11, 144:11 broke 180:10</p>
--	---	--	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>brother 50:14, 170:14 brothers 22:11, 181:10 brought 9:5, 14:1, 63:18, 83:9, 96:11, 158:2 brown 22:10, 36:19, 53:1, 81:19, 84:20, 117:8 buenos 100:7, 100:8, 144:20 build 73:20, 74:4, 102:22 building 8:11, 13:9, 21:18, 57:7, 123:13, 124:16, 148:9, 157:2, 181:15 buildings 21:19, 122:9, 181:16 built 110:21, 110:22, 177:3, 177:21, 177:22, 181:1 bulger 1:13, 4:21 bullet 166:10 burden 161:17 bus 57:11, 85:9, 93:16, 93:21, 93:23, 128:12, 131:20, 133:22 business 97:20, 111:13, 117:22, 118:1, 122:4, 122:5, 122:6, 122:11, 122:21, 122:24,</p>	<p>123:5, 142:11, 142:13, 143:20, 143:24, 148:21, 148:22, 152:12, 152:14, 156:4, 159:20, 165:3, 165:6, 165:12 businesses 122:21 businessmen 164:23, 165:3 busing 57:12 busy 62:17 butt 162:8 butts 157:18 buy 75:18, 75:22 buyer 29:21 buying 70:20, 70:21, 158:4 bypass 50:4, 62:15, 82:19, 82:21, 82:22, 82:23, 167:17, 167:22</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">C</p> <hr/> <p>c-a-m-p-o-s 88:13 c-h-r-i-s-t-i-n-a 95:18 cafes 171:21 calculations 118:20 california 117:5 call 5:2, 36:8, 59:12, 63:2, 70:13, 84:22, 114:18, 128:18,</p>	<p>128:19, 130:18, 146:2 called 49:9, 64:19, 86:9, 90:6, 99:20, 113:19, 115:3, 126:6, 126:22, 130:15, 164:4, 169:7 calling 129:8, 132:12 calls 44:13, 62:19, 82:20, 87:9, 166:20 came 26:23, 41:20, 62:15, 87:6, 92:4, 98:1, 98:3, 98:4, 99:13, 100:3, 139:4, 145:2, 158:12, 170:21 campos 88:11, 88:12 campus 16:4, 75:1, 75:2, 77:20, 80:11 campuses 73:7 can 7:5, 10:13, 11:13, 12:9, 12:16, 12:20, 15:9, 21:20, 21:24, 29:19, 31:6, 33:18, 34:6, 34:13, 34:19, 44:21, 48:22, 49:4, 50:5, 50:24, 53:24, 66:24, 73:20, 76:3, 76:4, 79:10, 79:11, 83:11, 84:22, 88:3, 92:1, 93:3,</p>	<p>95:5, 97:11, 97:14, 102:23, 104:6, 105:12, 109:7, 109:9, 115:17, 116:5, 118:17, 118:21, 121:8, 121:14, 127:9, 131:20, 132:22, 134:4, 134:6, 134:15, 135:24, 137:3, 138:6, 141:10, 144:13, 144:16, 146:14, 148:12, 151:9, 151:14, 151:19, 153:19, 157:3, 157:4, 160:4, 160:10, 161:22, 163:21, 164:14, 166:6, 170:15, 171:5, 171:23, 172:11, 172:14, 174:16, 175:9, 176:8, 177:9, 178:3, 178:5, 178:9 can't 8:1, 8:2, 10:19, 11:17, 33:8, 33:14, 33:15, 48:1, 62:22, 71:15, 76:2, 83:7, 87:2, 88:11, 91:4, 92:1, 112:12, 115:4, 117:21, 119:3, 120:13, 120:14, 123:19, 129:4, 129:10, 140:17, 160:10 cancelled 155:4 cancer 90:17, 90:21, 103:21 cannot 10:17, 10:20,</p>
---	--	---	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>11:7, 19:10, 19:11, 20:14, 26:1, 29:20, 44:24, 45:3, 45:7, 51:1, 51:10, 65:20, 67:14, 67:15, 96:2, 99:19, 105:13, 125:7, 132:16, 134:4, 138:9, 159:6, 159:18, 171:16 capabilities 72:15, 167:14 capacity 73:12, 77:12 capital 79:15, 89:22, 180:21 capture 33:14 car 38:17, 38:18, 91:9, 133:7, 133:21 cardiac 51:13, 82:5, 107:9 cardiologist 47:22, 47:23, 51:4 cardiovascular 48:12, 55:6 care" 32:5 cared 26:17, 116:12, 119:2, 139:12 career 76:12, 80:20, 96:21, 138:4 careers 80:15, 81:2, 85:16, 88:15, 88:21 carefully 170:8, 170:11 caregivers 124:9</p>	<p>cares 122:22 caring 26:10 carmel 97:8, 119:6 carmen 151:14 carry 24:3, 98:14 carrying 170:8 case 19:14, 21:12, 54:19, 90:19, 134:16, 134:21, 164:23, 165:12, 184:10 cases 167:17 catalyst 165:2 catch 51:5 categories 73:6 caught 50:9 cause 23:16, 105:23 caused 125:24 censure 34:22 center 1:13, 4:21, 7:24, 11:12, 13:7, 15:23, 16:2, 16:3, 16:15, 16:21, 25:10, 27:15, 53:9, 53:14, 53:15, 71:23, 73:4, 73:17, 74:6, 74:14, 74:15, 76:9, 77:21, 77:22, 77:23, 77:24,</p>	<p>78:16, 81:24, 84:13, 88:9, 94:20, 98:14, 101:11, 120:13, 127:3, 142:7, 143:11, 166:12, 166:17, 166:21, 167:12 centers 45:22, 73:23, 95:3 centralized 163:20 cents 27:23 ceo 7:23, 13:6, 17:6, 38:23, 63:5 ceo's 63:12 cerebral 17:23, 25:14, 25:19 cermilina 123:12 certain 38:13, 167:15 certainly 71:4, 97:16, 122:18 certificate 184:1 certificates 114:8 certification 33:24 certified 35:4, 81:24, 82:3, 82:4, 82:11, 114:3 certify 184:3 chair 40:21, 66:17 challenge 108:8 challenged 25:15, 25:20,</p>	<p>81:4 challenging 26:2, 26:15 chamber 121:23, 122:4 chambers 122:20 chance 41:20, 138:11, 165:18 change 7:5, 7:14, 17:16, 23:15, 29:2, 30:4, 31:19, 34:4, 35:5, 68:5, 68:19, 69:9, 75:4, 164:21, 164:22, 178:3 changed 8:21, 8:22, 13:17, 13:18, 131:17 changes 9:6, 10:2, 14:2, 14:23, 30:16, 67:5, 68:20, 105:1, 130:7, 130:21, 178:3, 182:10 changing 76:13, 76:14, 79:2 charge 81:15, 111:17, 111:19 charitable 30:14, 68:17 charity 10:4, 15:1, 30:19, 30:20, 30:22, 30:23, 31:1, 32:16, 33:22, 35:7, 68:7, 68:8, 68:10, 128:20, 129:5 check-ups 22:18</p>
---	---	--	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>checked 95:7 chess 152:7 chest 23:6 chicago 16:19, 16:21, 30:11, 30:12, 44:5, 68:15, 76:11, 124:6, 172:22, 177:6, 177:10 chief 62:11, 71:21, 76:8, 85:14, 97:20, 125:21, 126:4 child 59:17, 59:19, 100:17, 127:23 child-bearing 22:17 childbirth 55:4 childhood 104:14 children 39:17, 90:24, 93:17, 104:12, 113:6, 145:6, 146:10, 150:15, 157:3, 170:2, 173:5, 173:23, 173:24, 181:1, 181:4, 181:5 children's 54:21 chips 147:2 choked 116:13, 116:14 choose 136:13 choosing 128:15 chose 88:20</p>	<p>chris 18:24, 66:9, 109:12, 117:16, 118:12, 121:17, 121:22, 151:5 christina 95:17 chronic 143:13 churches 175:10 cigars 65:8 circa 164:3 circuit 35:15, 91:14, 111:1 circulates 114:23 circumstances 31:19, 146:15 cities 174:23 citizen 102:7, 109:16 citizens 140:12, 142:5 citizenship 104:20 civic 109:15, 171:17 civil 28:22, 97:15 claims 128:22, 129:17 classes 104:20 clean 136:19, 171:10, 179:16 cleaners 36:24 clear 7:11 clearing 164:13 clearinghouses 5:23</p>	<p>clearly 6:20 client 30:1 clients 87:4, 87:5 clinic 42:7, 42:8, 42:9, 42:14, 77:14, 124:6 clinical 9:23, 79:22, 80:3, 80:5, 80:17, 81:4, 85:24, 86:1, 89:2, 89:7, 95:24, 166:1, 168:23 clinicals 80:8 clinics 82:13, 95:4 close 15:16, 18:21, 20:20, 21:3, 23:3, 23:9, 29:12, 31:13, 31:17, 31:22, 40:1, 41:22, 43:2, 47:19, 52:12, 52:14, 56:8, 56:12, 57:1, 60:9, 67:15, 67:20, 69:12, 71:18, 81:12, 88:17, 90:12, 91:23, 93:8, 95:2, 99:15, 100:14, 102:10, 105:19, 110:13, 110:17, 111:7, 125:2, 130:2, 130:9, 130:18, 133:11, 133:24, 136:10, 137:17, 145:9, 150:24, 158:24, 172:1, 172:8,</p>	<p>177:23, 179:18 closed 25:7, 36:7, 41:21, 56:11, 65:21, 101:19, 115:9, 129:7, 132:16, 162:13 closer 8:13 closes 18:4, 26:18, 57:3, 85:4, 125:1, 166:23 closing 20:9, 29:6, 58:11, 60:7, 63:15, 65:8, 66:24, 67:2, 84:3, 87:8, 97:1, 99:23, 101:7, 104:6, 104:24, 105:10, 106:16, 112:21, 112:22, 124:22, 125:3, 137:21, 138:3, 141:22, 144:24, 145:16, 147:17, 151:9, 167:7, 167:9, 171:15, 173:12, 173:14, 175:17 closure 7:11, 7:13, 21:7, 24:5, 79:19, 79:20, 80:15, 80:23, 92:15, 94:10, 95:20, 100:14, 106:10, 121:24, 123:3, 123:7, 124:7, 128:4, 128:5, 130:14, 132:13, 132:17, 171:11 closures 130:4 clot 48:19</p>
--	--	--	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>clot-busting 49:8 clots 48:13 club 182:7 cms 73:24 co-sponsoring 130:13 coalition 108:19 code 3:24, 34:8, 34:15 coemeg 53:16, 53:21 cold 117:17 collaborate 151:8 collaborative 103:12 collapse 170:20 colleague 37:5 colleagues 16:1, 19:1, 37:2, 39:4, 39:6, 39:23, 48:2, 76:19, 127:1, 136:2, 136:5 collecting 157:14 collective 106:16, 114:9 college 79:16, 79:18, 79:24, 80:7, 80:11, 80:20, 81:3, 85:15, 85:20, 86:2, 88:13, 88:15, 88:18, 88:20, 89:8, 89:9, 89:18, 113:4</p>	<p>college's 80:24 color 22:12, 22:13, 101:7, 102:11, 106:23, 107:2, 128:6 combining 73:8, 73:14 come 17:4, 19:12, 19:17, 19:21, 24:10, 31:15, 38:1, 38:4, 39:18, 40:6, 41:14, 44:5, 70:17, 83:22, 85:22, 87:11, 87:12, 91:20, 98:9, 98:20, 104:19, 107:4, 110:2, 115:5, 118:8, 119:12, 124:5, 124:6, 126:7, 133:1, 136:8, 137:2, 139:2, 142:14, 143:10, 143:16, 144:9, 146:3, 166:20, 168:6, 170:5, 172:8, 175:19, 177:18, 181:12 comes 12:17, 116:6, 142:15, 142:23, 143:13 comfort 38:2 comfortable 56:3, 93:20 comforted 108:5 coming 39:9, 44:11, 98:17, 106:5, 108:4, 135:2, 156:11, 163:3,</p>	<p>170:12, 174:2, 174:9 comment 3:21, 4:14, 7:8, 62:8 comments 1:6, 107:12, 182:15, 182:23 commerce 47:15, 121:23, 122:20 commission 82:2, 86:21 commitment 74:11, 78:5, 128:20, 152:2 commitments 68:4, 69:18, 173:16 committed 16:12, 41:14, 46:8, 54:3, 74:12, 74:23 committee 92:19, 175:15 commodity 85:2 common 23:15 commotion 149:14 communicate 26:1, 138:6 communicates 46:13 communication 136:20 communities 8:14, 13:10, 16:18, 16:20, 19:24, 60:20, 60:21, 62:14, 66:15, 80:14, 80:18, 81:20, 83:2, 93:14, 102:11, 102:23, 103:13, 103:16, 105:15, 105:18,</p>	<p>107:1, 110:6, 120:3, 123:2, 124:3, 147:16, 150:4, 151:1, 158:12, 173:13, 175:1, 175:10, 178:1 community's 29:24, 78:8 community-based 74:19, 78:1, 93:7, 94:16, 102:19, 127:14, 161:7 companies 154:16 company 32:23, 148:20 compare 74:2 compassion 106:21, 108:2, 142:1 compassionate 54:13 compassionately 119:2 compelling 107:6 complain 120:13, 120:14, 153:17 complaining 146:24 complains 120:15 complaint 153:16, 153:19, 153:20, 153:21 completed 31:11, 35:20, 80:7, 98:4 completely 64:6, 108:6 compliance 2:5, 3:12, 5:6 complicated 25:24, 83:6</p>
--	---	--	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>complication 50:20</p> <p>complications 55:14</p> <p>comply 34:1</p> <p>components 86:1</p> <p>compounds 59:8</p> <p>concern 41:24, 60:12</p> <p>concerned 48:14, 139:3</p> <p>concerning 34:24</p> <p>concerns 37:7, 64:19, 77:5, 77:8, 87:1</p> <p>conclude 36:1</p> <p>concluded 183:3</p> <p>concluding 111:15</p> <p>condition 98:2</p> <p>conditions 53:3, 102:2</p> <p>conduct 78:19</p> <p>conducted 4:8</p> <p>confident 75:5</p> <p>confidentiality 5:18</p> <p>conflict 149:19</p> <p>confusion 7:9</p> <p>conjunction 46:10</p> <p>connected 39:11, 39:12</p> <p>connection 28:23</p> <p>consequences 105:8</p>	<p>consequently 168:10</p> <p>consider 38:21, 78:15, 79:3, 147:15</p> <p>consideration 6:10, 35:17, 35:22, 78:14, 81:6, 122:7, 129:16, 182:5</p> <p>considerations 35:1</p> <p>considered 152:24</p> <p>consistent 68:24</p> <p>consolidation 16:17, 72:3, 73:14, 74:3, 75:8</p> <p>conspiracy 28:22</p> <p>constant 83:13</p> <p>constantly 95:5</p> <p>consult 105:9</p> <p>consumers 72:12</p> <p>consummated 32:14</p> <p>consummation 68:11</p> <p>contact 5:9</p> <p>contacted 78:17</p> <p>continue 12:13, 16:18, 23:18, 30:10, 35:6, 68:13, 69:21, 71:9, 74:4, 75:5, 75:9, 77:17, 79:3, 89:17, 94:13, 95:9, 99:23, 100:1,</p>	<p>101:3, 107:3, 108:19, 108:20, 138:4, 138:12, 138:21, 171:23, 173:17</p> <p>continues 72:11, 88:4, 105:19</p> <p>contract 152:24</p> <p>contribute 150:5</p> <p>contributing 20:18, 23:10</p> <p>convenience 80:11</p> <p>conversation 63:2, 63:14</p> <p>conversations 173:16</p> <p>convey 111:15</p> <p>cook 35:15, 103:3, 103:12, 103:20, 103:23, 111:2, 177:5</p> <p>coordination 124:11</p> <p>coordinator 23:12</p> <p>copies 4:17, 6:23</p> <p>copy 116:22</p> <p>corner 142:10</p> <p>corporate 39:9, 67:9</p> <p>corporation 41:12, 165:9</p> <p>corporations 67:8</p> <p>correct 62:15, 144:5, 184:4</p> <p>correcting 11:22</p>	<p>correction 44:20</p> <p>corresponding 103:22</p> <p>cost 11:1, 27:18, 46:23, 53:19, 56:7, 158:21</p> <p>cost-effective 15:14, 78:3</p> <p>costs 32:2</p> <p>could 3:3, 29:13, 59:24, 66:11, 119:9, 136:12, 141:11, 146:16, 155:12, 156:2, 160:2</p> <p>couldn't 85:18, 115:5, 118:5, 118:9, 154:24, 155:16, 161:21, 170:6</p> <p>counsel 3:8, 28:16, 184:8</p> <p>counseling 163:4, 163:7</p> <p>count 55:9, 106:3, 116:22</p> <p>counted 140:17</p> <p>counties 44:9</p> <p>country 9:7, 14:3, 71:24, 72:16, 87:24, 133:2</p> <p>county 35:15, 87:12, 103:3, 103:4, 103:12, 103:21, 103:23, 111:2, 111:3, 177:6</p> <p>couple 50:16, 61:23,</p>
--	--	--	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>62:8, 141:10, 146:23, 148:6, 148:7, 163:2 coupled 9:17, 14:13 course 7:3, 62:19, 62:20, 95:23, 155:12, 170:3 court 3:17, 6:22, 35:15, 79:10, 111:2, 178:13, 178:15, 180:18 courthouse 111:3 courtney 3:11, 5:9, 7:1, 182:18 cover 46:7, 54:24, 56:6 coverage 46:5, 54:18, 54:20, 54:22 covered 5:19, 6:3, 26:23, 54:23, 108:6, 129:2 covers 66:14 cpr 82:6 crazy 155:9, 156:12, 181:23 create 9:19, 14:15, 104:24 credence 19:24 credit 10:5, 15:2 cries 19:24 crime 119:11 crisis 87:6, 87:24</p>	<p>critical 29:9, 100:21, 132:5 critically 29:18, 29:20, 33:1, 122:3 cross-subsidize 20:11 cross-subsidized 45:1, 45:3 cross-train 134:23 crossing 12:1, 50:11 crucial 166:1 cry 19:13, 19:14 crying 39:22 ct 49:15 culture 54:4, 124:3 cultures 43:23 current 8:10, 13:8, 18:15, 27:21, 30:23, 34:3, 59:23, 68:8, 72:1, 72:23, 80:16, 81:5, 129:17, 168:13 currently 25:5, 25:9, 27:11, 40:20, 41:1, 58:22, 60:13, 70:6, 73:12, 77:3, 77:7, 80:2, 123:23, 151:3, 151:15 curtail 85:10 customers 72:12 cut 6:17, 59:23</p>	<p>cuts 121:19</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">D</p> <hr/> <p>d-e-b-r-a 85:14 daca 104:13 dad 146:7, 170:10 daddy 153:2 daily 45:8, 58:23 damage 48:22, 127:5 dangers 107:8 dark 124:18 data 49:18 date 17:14 dates 182:12 daughter 33:8, 90:24, 102:1, 102:3 daughters 181:5 day 10:14, 15:10, 26:22, 37:17, 37:18, 58:9, 58:21, 60:22, 84:3, 90:8, 100:23, 104:18, 118:22, 118:23, 119:12, 133:16, 135:10, 144:3, 150:10, 156:11, 157:18, 180:1, 180:9, 181:23 days 9:11, 14:7, 20:22, 98:3, 117:17, 117:22,</p>	<p>124:2, 126:9, 129:1, 164:19, 164:20, 169:24 dead 50:19, 51:13 dealing 170:21 dealt 111:4 dean 88:14 dear 148:19, 154:17 death 13:13, 51:13, 85:6, 139:10, 168:3 deaths 20:19, 23:10, 55:8 debra 17:6, 85:14 decades 9:10, 14:6, 16:10, 44:1 deceitful 48:8 deceive 119:10 deception 116:1 deceptive 28:22, 32:19, 32:20 decide 165:5, 173:14 decided 29:15, 69:12, 158:4, 179:7 decimate 67:8 decision 97:17, 99:20, 108:15, 129:5, 131:14, 131:15, 150:9, 150:17, 159:16 decisions 122:8, 122:12,</p>
--	---	--	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>129:10, 149:23, 150:2, 150:3, 150:4, 157:11 decline 157:23 decrease 44:18, 55:15 decreasing 53:18 dedicated 21:23, 26:9, 39:5, 96:18 dee 119:17 deem 182:23 deemed 13:13 defendants 70:7 defer 35:16 deferred 104:13 deficiencies 167:22 defined 5:20 defining 117:3, 117:13, 117:14, 117:16 definitely 134:22 definition 81:18 defraud 33:6 degree 165:4 dejon's 17:16 delayed 25:17 deliver 38:17, 41:5, 52:1, 73:1, 74:9 delivered 19:16, 54:9,</p>	<p>64:24, 65:1, 90:15, 91:1, 112:20 deliveries 56:4, 73:15 delivering 54:8, 78:2 delivery 54:24, 60:10, 164:10, 164:13 delores 120:10 delusional 85:5 demand 105:9, 105:11, 144:4, 165:11 demised 18:6 demographics 51:17, 51:18, 106:20 demolishing 115:12 demonstrate 100:4 demonstrates 44:23 denial 129:17 denise 162:3 deny 33:19, 34:3, 35:10 department 1:1, 23:13, 40:21, 91:4, 122:15, 137:13, 160:21, 166:11, 166:19 departments 44:20, 56:9, 167:8, 167:20 depend 45:9, 47:13, 60:23, 83:3 depressed 21:2</p>	<p>depression 22:15, 141:4 deprived 51:6 deputy 125:21 des 119:20 desert 57:7 deserve 37:19, 37:20, 84:16, 87:16, 99:18 deserves 119:24 designation 53:16, 53:22 despair 22:15 desperately 23:19, 96:6 destroying 105:6 details 182:9 detained 44:19 determine 34:23 detox 20:17, 45:18 detrimental 80:10, 168:9, 173:12 devastated 115:8, 115:17, 181:13 devastating 50:19, 150:18, 150:19, 159:1 devastation 105:22, 144:8 develop 104:20 developed 78:7, 154:21 development 75:9</p>	<p>developmental 17:24, 18:1, 25:10 developmentally 25:17 diabetic 95:6 diabolically 127:9 diagnose 49:4 diagnosed 49:15, 126:22, 146:12 diagnosis 19:20 diagnostic 72:14 dialysis 123:22, 123:24, 124:6, 124:8, 125:1 did 8:23, 13:19, 40:8, 62:23, 63:14, 64:21, 69:9, 111:22, 113:4, 115:7, 115:22, 126:14, 139:17, 146:2, 164:15, 166:16, 169:7, 169:20, 170:4, 170:11, 177:7, 181:6 didn't 12:9, 13:4, 51:21, 69:13, 96:13, 113:5, 117:2, 118:8, 124:23, 133:4, 133:11, 135:2, 136:8, 140:4, 149:2, 156:1, 156:22, 171:3 die 48:22, 55:4, 55:5, 55:11, 67:19, 108:15,</p>
---	--	---	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>131:23 died 139:15 dies 48:20 diet 95:6 difference 12:10, 50:21, 50:23, 121:5, 128:16, 151:20, 168:2 different 27:6, 50:4, 97:14, 98:12, 98:14, 112:13, 112:22, 114:4, 148:13, 158:12, 161:6, 163:14, 173:1, 175:11, 181:12 difficult 25:24, 26:13, 85:23 difficulties 12:4, 12:11 dignified 102:23 dignity 108:1 diligence 64:4 directly 21:10 director 24:23, 25:6, 25:9, 86:20, 102:17 directors 122:14, 149:16 disabilities 17:24, 18:1 disappear 28:7 disaster 105:22 discharge 138:14</p>	<p>discharged 98:1 disciplines 46:10 disclose 5:24 discontinuance 29:3, 31:13, 31:18, 34:3, 35:9, 35:11, 35:13, 35:23, 43:18 discontinuation 4:2, 20:5 discontinue 4:5 discourage 80:19 discretion 31:10 discuss 16:1 discussion 107:14, 149:4 disease 49:2, 52:4, 55:6, 103:21 diseases 8:17, 13:13 disgrace 64:7 disingenuous 64:6 disparities 104:1, 105:8, 105:16 disposed 84:22 disproportionate 131:11 disregarded 152:8 disruption 47:11 distance 23:1, 38:17, 73:5, 83:20, 167:21</p>	<p>distributes 130:23 district 66:13, 111:2, 151:4, 151:5 districts 161:9 diverse 16:18, 16:20, 124:2 divides 50:10 dmg 146:12 doc 64:20 docs 64:19 doctor 17:17, 57:9, 59:20, 91:1, 133:12, 134:7, 148:10, 160:4, 169:13, 177:7, 181:19 doctor's 148:8 doctors 8:21, 11:3, 13:17, 15:17, 19:5, 21:24, 36:6, 37:1, 39:2, 39:5, 42:5, 54:11, 57:8, 61:23, 66:20, 69:2, 76:24, 83:8, 90:5, 90:13, 92:22, 94:19, 107:7, 112:19, 119:22, 129:14, 136:5, 136:18, 137:1, 138:2, 148:3, 154:6, 154:11, 157:12, 157:21, 158:11, 159:23, 161:22, 164:23, 169:18,</p>	<p>170:18, 171:8, 175:22, 181:15, 181:17, 181:18 documentation 4:17 does 15:21, 28:5, 38:8, 47:7, 47:9, 84:21, 92:7, 94:5, 94:16, 94:17, 95:1, 104:24, 115:22, 145:9, 145:20, 167:13, 176:18, 181:13 doesn't 12:9, 31:18, 41:3, 50:3, 93:8, 93:24, 109:21, 114:14, 116:14, 118:2, 120:4, 122:11, 143:24, 158:23, 169:2 dog 176:9 doing 63:8, 72:20, 88:1, 111:9, 127:8, 143:6, 144:2, 146:22, 157:13, 171:17 dollar 27:23, 131:4 dollars 15:11, 27:13, 27:19, 131:6 domestic 145:2, 145:11, 162:16, 162:23, 163:22, 172:17, 173:5 domestics 37:1 domiciles 44:13 don't 12:19, 24:21,</p>
--	--	---	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

27:4, 32:19, 36:5, 38:10, 38:18, 39:21, 42:1, 42:12, 43:2, 45:1, 48:24, 50:9, 50:17, 52:6, 53:10, 53:11, 53:12, 53:13, 56:6, 59:9, 61:2, 61:7, 62:17, 65:4, 65:8, 75:18, 75:22, 83:6, 83:8, 85:21, 87:18, 95:14, 96:15, 97:13, 109:4, 110:15, 114:11, 115:6, 115:19, 117:1, 121:6, 122:8, 122:9, 133:7, 133:21, 133:24, 134:10, 134:17, 135:17, 136:1, 136:3, 136:7, 136:10, 136:15, 136:21, 137:17, 142:14, 144:9, 147:4, 149:11, 152:11, 154:19, 156:6, 156:11, 156:13, 157:9, 160:2, 161:15, 161:17, 162:12, 163:16, 165:1, 165:9, 168:13, 177:22, 179:24 done 25:23, 64:12, 112:4, 126:12, 126:14, 146:20, 146:21, 149:4, 156:24, 160:13, 162:17, 162:22 door 99:16 doors 67:15, 67:20,	81:22, 91:18, 91:23, 145:9, 151:1 double 126:9 doubt 9:4, 13:24, 116:2 down 9:14, 14:10, 29:21, 31:23, 40:24, 76:4, 79:9, 79:11, 79:13, 86:11, 90:8, 91:23, 93:9, 112:23, 116:7, 118:24, 128:15, 131:14, 131:15, 136:18, 158:5, 159:1, 170:11, 171:9, 171:16, 174:3, 178:13 down's 17:23, 25:13, 25:19 downtown 19:7, 90:1 dozens 98:16, 106:12 dr 18:14, 18:15, 18:19, 18:22, 24:11, 24:13, 24:17, 25:3, 28:4, 28:11, 28:14, 33:12, 34:13, 36:12, 37:5, 40:10, 40:13, 40:16, 40:19, 43:10, 43:12, 44:8, 46:19, 47:17, 47:20, 50:23, 52:8, 52:15, 52:21, 54:15, 55:22, 57:24, 58:4, 58:7,	62:9, 62:20, 63:2, 64:11, 64:18, 65:3, 66:19, 68:22, 90:16, 94:24, 122:19, 126:4, 148:9, 153:8, 157:20, 160:6, 160:14, 168:21, 168:23, 171:1, 171:4, 181:3 drain 140:14, 140:19 drawn 171:22 draws 16:22 drills 54:16 drive 49:20, 49:21, 49:22, 91:9, 163:16, 182:7 driven 161:4 driving 51:11 drop 51:13, 179:7 dropping 14:9 drove 58:20, 61:12 drug 45:18, 83:11 drugs 22:15 due 15:16, 32:2, 138:10, 152:5, 152:15 dupage 103:4 during 7:3, 54:18, 67:4, 68:23, 69:9, 70:4, 85:5 duty 109:15, 171:17	dying 177:14 dynamic 74:6 <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">E</p> <hr/> e- 1:7, 3:7 e-l-a-z-q-u-e-z 174:9 e-r-p 62:1 each 58:21, 151:9, 171:13 earlier 32:16, 74:18, 166:18 early 76:15 earned 73:20 earth 177:17 easier 130:1 easily 44:24, 84:16, 152:7 east 47:6 easy 46:24, 93:12, 98:10, 153:17, 173:13 eat 51:1, 147:1 echo 108:13 economic 106:22, 123:1, 140:13, 141:3 economies 72:3 economy 123:6 ecrms 82:7
--	---	---	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>ect 45:20 ects 22:5 edap 82:2, 82:11 edge 46:2, 47:6 educated 161:5 education 46:16, 104:15, 105:2, 105:5, 171:20 educational 140:20 edwards 63:9, 63:10 effect 47:13, 60:19, 141:6, 159:1 effected 137:22 effective 11:1 effectively 132:3 effectiveness 74:19 efficient 52:1 efforts 74:3, 151:3, 173:18 egypt 44:9 eight 17:13, 110:20 eisenhower 50:12 either 50:19, 50:24, 81:21, 83:6 elderly 83:12, 113:3, 113:8, 150:16, 168:12 elected 106:15, 117:4,</p>	<p>130:19, 149:3, 151:3, 161:11, 172:19 electrocompulsive 21:1 electronic 72:14 elgin 146:9 eligible 128:10 eliminate 130:2 elimination 79:22, 130:5 elmhurst 26:21, 44:16, 53:13, 60:15, 113:15, 154:5, 155:5, 160:23 elmwood 44:15, 126:19 eloquently 37:6 else 50:18, 51:22, 59:5, 59:14, 62:18, 70:15, 137:17, 140:16, 141:16, 144:16, 156:15, 168:3, 168:15, 172:4, 172:7, 175:19, 178:20 elsewhere 47:1, 50:7, 108:20 email 84:4 embedded 37:8 emboli 55:13 embolism 55:8 emergencies 54:17, 55:6, 82:4, 167:15</p>	<p>emergency 22:2, 23:8, 24:23, 45:9, 46:19, 49:13, 54:19, 58:20, 60:11, 62:12, 62:16, 73:18, 77:2, 81:15, 82:2, 82:3, 83:1, 87:7, 91:3, 94:21, 96:9, 100:18, 101:22, 116:17, 124:11, 125:15, 126:8, 133:15, 134:7, 142:16, 146:19, 166:11, 167:8, 167:17, 167:19 emmanuel 66:9 emotional 16:8, 165:23, 166:4, 168:23 employed 184:9 employee 139:2, 151:15, 156:21, 157:6, 161:14, 180:24 employees 21:21, 78:14, 78:20, 78:22, 78:23, 83:20, 83:21, 92:22, 98:20, 129:15, 137:12, 137:19, 137:23, 141:23, 149:3, 171:19, 181:14 employment 60:18 empty 10:14, 15:11 ems 23:12 emts 167:10, 167:23,</p>	<p>168:6 encouragement 19:4 encouraging 23:2 end 33:15, 40:3, 50:18, 137:6, 143:11, 144:3, 150:10, 163:22, 165:19 ended 134:24 enforce 65:15 engage 72:13, 102:20 engaged 80:1 enhanced 72:14, 74:16 enough 19:3, 90:3, 90:17, 102:6, 107:3, 118:8, 158:13, 169:3 ensure 5:16, 54:2, 65:20, 88:4, 132:15 entered 6:8 entire 9:7, 14:3, 42:13, 48:6, 68:23, 76:12, 96:21, 115:2 entities 5:19 entity 6:3, 39:9 envelope 19:3 environment 79:23, 145:5 environmental 124:12 epidurals 54:18</p>
--	--	---	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>equally 81:3 equals 48:17, 51:6 equipment 84:10 equity 29:15, 32:22 er 136:17, 166:14 eric 68:22 escaped 162:23 especially 22:21, 101:6, 125:23, 144:7 essential 20:7, 52:3, 57:4 estate 32:24 estela 100:10 ethical 155:18, 156:3, 156:16 ethics 155:17 etts 22:5 evaporated 177:23 evasive 53:16, 72:15 even 26:2, 31:18, 33:7, 33:23, 50:3, 51:21, 56:6, 58:9, 60:12, 61:14, 67:11, 84:7, 96:11, 112:4, 120:3, 122:16, 136:7, 136:24, 138:2, 140:18, 140:20, 146:8, 146:22, 155:2,</p>	<p>156:11, 167:24, 177:17, 180:1 evening 121:16, 134:14, 137:9, 153:8, 166:6, 172:15 events 65:17, 161:11 ever 50:9, 146:16 every 10:14, 15:10, 33:3, 37:6, 37:20, 38:2, 38:3, 51:24, 55:5, 58:21, 60:22, 69:3, 71:9, 89:14, 91:4, 93:3, 98:24, 104:18, 111:2, 111:3, 116:5, 116:21, 119:10, 136:17, 138:19, 139:7, 139:11, 143:20, 158:18, 171:13, 179:10 everybody 12:8, 12:23, 28:18, 41:21, 42:1, 42:23, 85:19, 119:23, 120:1, 120:8, 134:14, 136:23, 148:18, 153:24, 156:23, 160:17, 161:19, 161:24, 172:13 everybody's 6:15 everyday 143:12 everyone 12:16, 12:17, 12:20, 66:7, 70:15, 86:19, 88:6, 109:1, 112:2, 117:18,</p>	<p>120:2, 120:6, 123:11, 132:20, 136:20, 137:9, 137:11, 137:17, 138:1, 141:16, 143:18, 143:23, 146:17, 147:10, 150:21, 151:13, 174:7, 177:1 everyone's 3:4, 172:12 everything 17:16, 64:20, 65:9, 79:10, 88:3, 91:21, 92:5, 99:12, 125:9, 139:9, 146:20, 164:14, 176:10 everywhere 66:11 evidence 24:7 evolve 72:11, 93:10 evolved 93:5 evs 136:19 exacerbate 105:16 exact 68:21 exactly 126:14, 132:1, 143:5, 144:2, 154:12, 158:14 example 9:9, 14:5, 47:2 examples 72:4 exceeded 10:9, 15:5 excellence 53:9, 53:14, 53:15, 73:17, 114:3 excellent 22:20, 37:21,</p>	<p>46:4, 84:18, 120:13, 148:4 excellently 107:19 except 127:17 excess 9:23, 14:20 excited 162:15 excitement 179:14 excuse 28:21 excuses 32:12 executive 86:20 exemplary 164:15, 168:21 exemption 1:7, 3:7, 4:1, 30:4, 31:6, 31:7, 35:5, 35:10, 35:17 exercise 120:13, 133:10, 179:11 exhaustion 85:7 exhibiting 126:21 exist 105:17 expand 78:5 expanded 78:6 expect 31:15, 93:15, 93:18, 115:23, 116:14, 117:2, 135:8, 155:24 expectancies 104:4 expectancy 104:2, 150:22 expected 116:10, 116:11,</p>
--	--	---	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

117:1 expecting 93:16 expedient 22:5 expensive 55:3, 117:6 experience 54:4, 73:10, 76:12, 76:23, 79:23 experienced 54:9, 96:5 experiences 96:16, 139:8, 148:14 expertise 127:15, 165:5 expertly 119:2 explain 31:16, 118:21 explained 33:12, 37:6 exponentially 23:10 express 39:6, 96:2, 100:13, 115:6 expresses 129:2 extensive 15:22 extra 114:13 extremely 107:21	facets 43:21 facilities 1:2, 1:10, 2:2, 3:9, 3:23, 4:9, 4:10, 5:10, 9:1, 10:1, 13:21, 14:21, 19:23, 20:15, 24:1, 27:24, 28:7, 33:21, 44:21, 46:22, 47:3, 60:16, 65:13, 77:19, 99:9, 129:24, 130:2, 130:7, 130:9, 131:11, 138:9, 175:11, 182:17 facility 5:16, 9:3, 13:23, 31:9, 45:15, 74:7, 85:24, 125:1, 149:13, 167:2 fact 23:13, 34:1, 40:24, 45:6, 60:12, 107:15, 118:17, 119:9, 125:18, 126:13, 127:3, 174:13, 174:18, 177:4 factions 43:23 factor 74:22, 140:23, 140:24, 143:17 factors 79:3, 81:7 facts 69:14 faculty 85:16 failure 51:7 faint 133:13 fair 39:13	fairs 174:21 faith 106:14 faith-based 161:8 falcone 180:20, 180:21 fallacy 39:3 falls 103:18 false 28:22, 29:1, 31:5, 32:18, 34:9, 34:16, 34:20, 68:1, 68:2 familiar 137:11 families 22:8, 22:24, 47:14, 60:18, 60:21, 86:24, 102:21, 104:12, 104:15, 124:10, 128:8, 128:9, 137:24, 139:6, 150:3 family 26:8, 40:21, 40:23, 54:23, 58:16, 61:11, 93:15, 98:9, 100:22, 100:23, 101:23, 107:18, 107:20, 107:24, 114:6, 125:6, 126:13, 128:3, 139:13, 146:6, 147:22, 150:11, 150:12, 150:16, 164:2, 164:4, 166:8, 170:16, 181:8, 181:11, 181:17 family's 109:17	fan 127:10 fancy 27:4 far 38:16, 39:21, 44:9, 47:5, 134:1, 140:22, 146:17, 167:15, 177:13, 178:2 farther 118:10, 167:24 faster 52:1 father 50:13, 65:3, 65:7, 97:4, 119:7, 126:18, 126:20, 127:4, 170:9 fathers 88:23 fauerso 132:20, 132:24, 133:1 fault 139:16 favorable 26:6 favorite 170:4 fear 26:17, 181:17 february 31:22, 66:22, 124:21, 135:16 federal 5:7, 103:18 federally 74:14 feel 7:15, 8:3, 19:3, 38:22, 39:7, 56:3, 78:23, 85:18, 100:22, 109:15, 112:7, 128:24 feeling 112:13, 126:6,
F			
f-a-u-e-r-s-o 133:1 fabric 105:7, 106:19 fabulous 179:11 face 109:14 faces 137:11			

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>166:3 feelings 157:9 feels 119:4 fell 162:7 fellow 19:8, 142:5 felt 100:18, 102:4 fenske 178:24, 180:8, 180:12 fetal 55:2 fever 125:15 few 9:9, 31:12, 31:19, 36:6, 44:17, 97:8, 118:24, 135:18, 142:17, 148:23, 154:10, 158:4, 159:3, 165:15, 166:10 fewer 8:24, 9:12, 13:20, 14:8, 167:8 field 82:9 fight 23:16, 39:7, 41:10, 41:18, 61:19, 69:17, 69:19, 69:22, 69:23, 71:9, 88:3, 91:2, 91:7, 91:8, 93:3, 95:9, 109:14, 117:19, 120:6, 123:8, 136:11, 137:5, 151:2, 152:10 fighter 58:18, 58:19</p>	<p>fighting 36:2, 55:15, 70:8, 116:24, 136:6, 181:21 figueroa 172:15, 172:16 figure 112:18 figured 177:20 filed 28:20, 31:12, 31:21, 35:14, 64:22, 68:4, 94:5 filled 22:8, 96:18 final 126:17, 162:10 finally 72:11, 74:21, 77:13, 105:3 finances 158:14 financial 9:19, 10:12, 14:16, 15:8, 26:15, 56:1, 56:15, 78:5, 117:23, 184:10 financially 56:21 find 26:14, 80:17, 81:4, 100:19, 113:14, 140:16, 157:7, 158:22, 160:8, 167:16, 181:18 finding 29:17, 110:17 fine 126:10 fines 65:16 fire 23:12, 58:18, 58:19, 62:10,</p>	<p>125:21, 166:19 firing 21:21 first 17:10, 27:9, 28:1, 36:8, 36:10, 36:11, 36:14, 44:11, 49:1, 49:2, 49:11, 53:8, 54:7, 73:3, 90:8, 90:18, 96:5, 97:6, 100:15, 100:23, 106:14, 109:19, 125:13, 132:21, 137:19, 167:9, 178:17 firsthand 78:4 fisher 1:24, 184:3, 184:15 fit 66:1 fitness 46:16, 84:13, 88:9, 101:11, 112:24, 179:13 five 41:13, 47:7, 74:13, 81:16, 112:6, 143:21, 147:18, 162:6, 164:19 flipping 32:23 flood 45:8 floor 2:6, 134:19, 170:20, 182:20 flourished 143:23 fluid 51:8 focus 49:1, 53:17</p>	<p>folks 62:17, 63:1, 131:21 follow 91:12 follow-up 124:17 following 30:8, 30:9, 30:18, 31:3, 68:11, 68:13, 70:2, 182:12, 182:16 food 74:7 for-profit 57:1, 67:8 forced 115:18, 152:18, 152:20, 167:4, 167:10, 167:17, 167:23, 168:14 forces 73:14 foregoing 184:4 foreign 152:3 forest 27:15, 44:15, 75:1, 77:19, 106:8, 110:5, 124:4 forever 28:8, 173:2 forget 52:7, 113:18, 133:22, 143:3, 143:4, 168:13 forgotten 141:16 format 12:19 former 157:23 formerly 25:10 forth 30:15, 68:18,</p>
--	---	---	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>135:5 fortunate 152:6, 153:5 forward 16:23, 21:12, 52:1, 61:11, 75:11, 93:2, 94:9, 106:5, 109:13, 141:12, 141:18, 161:3 foster 158:18 fosters 46:15 found 54:7, 83:10, 91:23, 138:14, 138:15, 155:5, 169:16 foundation 73:19 four 27:17, 27:22, 37:23, 39:19, 41:12, 41:13, 49:10, 49:11, 49:13, 49:17, 55:10, 77:18, 93:19, 93:20, 98:3, 124:1, 137:22, 164:5 four-star 74:1 four-year-old 33:8 frame 62:21 frames 51:4, 51:15 francisco 100:16 frank 109:5 frankie 180:22 franklin 44:15, 103:15 fraud 19:15, 28:21,</p>	<p>65:21, 107:15, 111:4, 119:9, 130:16, 130:17, 153:1 free 7:15, 8:3, 22:19, 130:9, 141:14, 161:1 free-standing 20:14 freeze 85:6 freezing 117:17 freight 50:10 frequently 45:7, 45:22 fresh 137:14 friday 92:17, 106:13, 107:5, 138:19 friend 38:22, 64:10, 66:4, 92:3, 118:18 friends 19:2, 26:20, 64:11, 65:2, 136:2, 181:17 front 13:3, 66:4, 78:2, 115:20, 137:11, 151:3 full 6:21, 51:8, 82:17, 82:19, 88:24, 101:11, 105:11, 112:23 fully 175:16 fun 121:12 function 156:7, 156:8, 159:7 functioning 27:17</p>	<p>fund 29:15 funding 10:7, 15:4, 74:13, 129:21, 131:10, 132:5 funny 164:21 furniture 84:10 further 23:5, 80:17, 131:3 furthermore 45:23 future 23:10, 28:4, 28:8, 34:24, 75:11, 76:20, 80:16, 80:19, 81:5, 96:22, 98:22, 132:16</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">G</p> <hr/> <p>g-i-o-v-a-n-n-i 97:6 g-o-v-a-s 95:18 gain 67:9 game 152:7 gandhi 56:19 gastroenterology 23:7 gave 41:20, 65:3, 68:4, 116:18, 119:23, 133:4, 170:19 gender 102:24 general 3:8, 10:3, 14:24, 23:5, 24:4, 42:11, 46:23, 48:10,</p>	<p>65:14, 65:19, 66:2, 70:13, 130:15, 132:14, 147:13, 172:19 general's 21:13 generally 165:19 generations 28:9, 75:11, 106:21, 164:4, 164:5 gentleman 63:9, 90:4 genuine 158:22 geri 20:21 geriatric 82:14 gero 47:9 get 12:12, 12:13, 20:2, 22:4, 31:5, 31:7, 33:9, 41:17, 48:13, 49:15, 49:16, 50:2, 51:14, 52:12, 52:13, 53:22, 59:6, 59:11, 59:12, 59:15, 60:4, 61:15, 61:16, 69:22, 71:18, 75:20, 76:24, 81:11, 86:17, 93:15, 93:22, 95:5, 95:7, 99:13, 99:24, 104:15, 111:18, 112:18, 115:23, 116:10, 116:11, 116:13, 116:14, 117:11, 121:14, 125:24, 131:22, 131:24, 133:13, 136:21,</p>
---	---	---	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>146:14, 146:21, 154:19, 155:12, 157:10, 159:13, 162:20, 162:24, 163:6, 163:17, 163:21, 168:8, 175:22, 176:8, 176:11 gets 146:12, 170:24 getting 96:6, 113:11, 141:17, 151:5, 154:3, 154:4, 154:14, 166:22, 170:1 giovanni 97:4, 119:7 girl 151:24 girlfriend 59:22 girth 56:22 give 19:19, 19:23, 24:9, 37:20, 40:6, 49:8, 64:22, 65:7, 66:20, 71:5, 92:8, 162:4, 166:3, 176:6 given 3:24, 22:19, 56:7, 65:17, 132:17, 170:17, 171:20 gives 165:11 giving 65:4, 153:24, 157:17, 181:22 glad 175:22, 176:8 glenn 18:15, 41:8, 62:23 glory 97:22</p>	<p>go 7:6, 7:14, 8:7, 9:11, 14:7, 18:20, 32:19, 36:5, 38:15, 39:21, 41:14, 42:16, 42:18, 50:15, 51:7, 51:23, 59:4, 59:5, 59:24, 60:22, 60:23, 61:14, 66:4, 77:3, 82:18, 82:20, 82:23, 83:16, 90:9, 90:11, 93:1, 93:12, 93:18, 95:5, 95:14, 95:15, 98:24, 108:13, 111:18, 113:3, 114:12, 121:17, 126:1, 133:8, 134:4, 134:6, 135:24, 136:1, 136:10, 136:12, 141:8, 141:11, 141:19, 142:17, 143:10, 144:1, 146:16, 147:4, 159:18, 161:15, 161:22, 166:6, 167:1, 167:17, 170:15, 171:5, 171:16, 171:18, 172:13, 174:23, 175:9, 175:10, 175:11, 176:8, 176:10, 178:21, 179:9, 180:14, 180:17 god 50:15, 90:16, 100:5, 171:6 goes 95:15, 123:4, 154:22, 176:18 golf 182:7</p>	<p>gomez 101:12, 101:14 gone 91:19, 94:2, 96:14, 146:19 gonzalez 162:2, 162:3 good 3:2, 3:3, 3:5, 7:20, 7:21, 12:23, 12:24, 13:5, 17:5, 18:14, 23:2, 36:14, 55:21, 57:24, 58:1, 65:2, 66:7, 66:8, 66:19, 70:5, 71:12, 76:7, 79:14, 85:13, 92:3, 97:13, 101:14, 106:6, 111:24, 112:1, 121:16, 122:4, 122:5, 122:11, 123:6, 123:11, 127:19, 134:14, 137:9, 143:12, 144:22, 147:9, 149:20, 151:13, 153:8, 159:4, 160:17, 162:2, 163:24, 165:15, 172:15 google 69:3 gordon 43:10, 43:12, 44:8, 46:19 got 8:24, 12:15, 13:20, 40:9, 43:5, 47:18, 50:16, 62:18, 63:1, 63:7, 63:23, 86:14, 88:8, 88:9, 90:3, 90:18, 91:24, 101:11,</p>	<p>106:3, 113:2, 113:17, 114:4, 116:17, 117:16, 118:6, 118:7, 118:20, 124:18, 156:24, 162:15, 169:19, 177:15 gotcha 121:21, 170:10 gotten 169:21, 171:20 gottlieb 20:20, 21:7, 26:5, 47:8, 49:21, 53:11, 56:9, 77:21, 126:24, 154:7, 167:11, 167:13, 167:16, 179:22 gottlieb's 167:22 gov 182:9, 182:14 govas 95:17 government 64:1, 86:16, 87:23 grab 172:14 grad 137:14 grade 169:13 gradually 157:23 graduates 89:16, 176:14 grand 150:10 grandchildren 90:14, 90:15, 101:21, 181:2 granddaughter 90:16 grandfather 181:9 grandfather's 170:23</p>
--	---	---	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>grandma 139:15, 139:18 grandmother 109:19 grandparents 139:10, 146:7, 169:1, 170:19 grandson 175:24, 176:1, 176:2, 176:14, 176:18 grange 56:10 granger 175:21 grant 74:13, 77:9 grape 66:10 grateful 162:5, 173:2 gratitude 96:2 great 21:19, 62:23, 90:14, 99:20, 112:2, 127:10, 141:23, 148:13, 175:14 greater 30:12, 60:12, 68:15, 122:17, 132:17 greatest 10:13, 15:9, 119:11 greatly 81:7 greatness 56:20 greed 97:22, 152:16 greedy 130:8 greeted 146:17 grew 59:19, 128:2</p>	<p>ground 107:3 group 19:6, 45:19, 115:20, 145:4, 162:20, 163:9, 182:13 groups 161:8, 161:9, 163:7, 174:1 grove 110:7 grow 10:10, 138:5 growing 76:13, 141:5 grown 58:12 growth 15:6, 123:1 guarded 74:8 guards 171:9 guess 61:22, 180:4 guide 82:8 guild 2:5, 3:12, 7:2 guise 95:8 guy 63:6, 63:10, 63:22 guys 48:15, 49:9, 49:15, 50:21, 76:3, 91:12, 106:2, 127:7, 134:15, 134:18, 135:1, 136:14, 137:7, 143:5, 143:14, 168:6 gyn 21:6, 22:3, 22:18, 38:13, 46:11, 53:5,</p>	<p>54:22 gyne 37:17 gynecological 96:6, 114:5 gynecologist 52:16 gynecology 53:7, 53:10, 53:16 gyms 55:1</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">H</p> <hr/> <p>h-a-r-v-e-y 58:8 had 8:16, 9:13, 10:14, 15:9, 22:12, 24:24, 26:5, 26:21, 26:24, 31:5, 31:7, 31:10, 32:13, 41:12, 44:2, 50:1, 55:13, 61:17, 62:10, 62:12, 66:18, 89:12, 91:1, 92:21, 95:24, 96:3, 96:16, 96:17, 96:23, 100:16, 100:17, 101:21, 102:6, 104:3, 111:11, 112:16, 113:3, 115:2, 120:12, 120:14, 121:11, 131:16, 133:16, 134:20, 135:9, 135:20, 139:8, 146:23, 148:2, 148:14, 153:16, 153:18, 153:20, 155:2, 155:3, 155:5, 157:23, 158:3, 158:13, 162:7, 164:9, 165:17,</p>	<p>169:13, 169:16, 169:21, 169:23, 170:2, 170:12, 177:6, 177:12, 179:4, 179:17, 181:1, 181:2, 181:9, 182:3 half 49:10, 49:11, 56:4, 75:19, 103:17 hall 84:5, 84:8 hamburger 24:18 hamid 157:20 hand 112:8, 116:17, 145:15, 164:11, 170:22 handed 23:11 handful 164:6 handle 90:19 handled 48:7 handling 25:24 hands 38:1, 166:3, 171:7 hands-on 80:24 hanging 51:1 happen 64:13, 64:17, 67:15, 87:9, 87:14, 92:1, 93:15, 94:11, 95:8, 98:22, 110:20, 124:24, 131:21, 140:19, 161:16, 173:15, 181:7, 181:13</p>
---	---	---	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>happened 59:23, 63:20, 116:19, 151:23, 159:10 happening 72:17, 92:6, 93:21, 94:7, 110:16, 154:8, 154:9, 155:7 happens 38:17, 38:18, 93:6, 93:22, 94:3 happy 40:14, 133:3, 134:3, 154:23, 171:2, 176:12, 176:15 hard 77:2, 79:4, 113:11, 114:9, 152:10, 181:18 hard-working 21:20, 21:23, 66:20, 87:15 hardly 129:2 hardship 61:1, 61:2 harvey 57:24, 58:4, 58:7, 60:3, 61:6 has 3:16, 8:20, 8:21, 9:22, 13:16, 13:18, 13:23, 14:18, 14:19, 17:16, 19:15, 21:17, 22:19, 22:21, 25:13, 25:23, 26:11, 32:6, 33:7, 33:16, 35:19, 37:21, 42:4, 43:24, 44:1, 44:4, 44:10, 44:20, 45:15, 46:24,</p>	<p>47:9, 54:23, 59:14, 60:14, 67:23, 69:23, 70:8, 72:18, 73:12, 73:19, 73:20, 73:24, 76:12, 79:24, 82:12, 82:14, 84:7, 89:8, 91:19, 94:18, 96:19, 98:1, 101:23, 102:2, 104:9, 106:17, 112:23, 114:2, 126:18, 132:10, 138:5, 139:6, 139:11, 139:23, 141:2, 141:16, 142:24, 143:9, 145:5, 146:7, 146:12, 147:22, 148:1, 148:9, 148:21, 156:4, 156:15, 161:2, 161:10, 166:16, 169:6, 169:7, 172:21, 173:1, 173:4, 173:7, 174:12, 175:13, 179:20, 180:1, 181:10, 182:3 hasn't 101:11 haven 147:23, 173:4 haven't 102:6, 111:10 having 12:11, 17:24, 50:14, 66:24, 89:2, 96:2, 96:22, 123:4, 126:23, 157:7, 157:8 he's 11:18, 17:11, 40:24, 41:1, 41:2, 63:10,</p>	<p>63:11, 65:4, 65:6, 67:1, 145:22 heads 116:7 health 1:1, 1:2, 1:10, 2:2, 3:9, 3:15, 3:23, 4:9, 4:10, 5:9, 5:16, 5:19, 5:20, 5:22, 5:24, 6:4, 9:3, 10:13, 13:23, 16:6, 19:22, 24:1, 31:8, 33:21, 39:14, 43:21, 45:9, 45:15, 45:24, 47:2, 47:5, 63:16, 65:13, 67:2, 67:7, 67:8, 67:24, 70:7, 70:15, 70:19, 70:21, 74:15, 77:11, 78:18, 80:20, 82:13, 82:14, 82:15, 82:17, 85:16, 86:21, 87:1, 87:14, 88:15, 88:21, 94:16, 94:19, 97:13, 97:18, 99:8, 99:18, 103:10, 103:11, 103:20, 104:1, 104:9, 104:23, 105:4, 105:8, 105:11, 105:16, 105:21, 107:10, 107:22, 113:2, 118:23, 127:13, 129:24, 130:7, 132:11, 135:23, 140:4, 147:23, 158:19, 165:24, 166:1, 167:1, 168:10, 173:9,</p>	<p>174:21, 174:22, 178:1, 179:10, 182:17 healthcare 9:6, 9:7, 10:1, 14:2, 14:4, 14:21, 16:3, 16:10, 16:15, 20:11, 27:10, 27:18, 29:9, 46:23, 52:16, 71:23, 72:5, 72:16, 72:20, 74:10, 75:8, 76:12, 76:15, 76:20, 77:18, 78:3, 78:8, 79:21, 79:24, 80:13, 80:21, 81:2, 84:24, 85:1, 92:8, 93:7, 93:11, 104:16, 106:14, 107:7, 127:14, 127:21, 127:22, 128:4, 129:8, 140:13, 140:22, 150:13, 157:4, 173:11, 173:18, 175:14 healthy 105:5, 113:1, 141:14, 148:2 hear 8:1, 8:2, 10:17, 10:19, 10:20, 11:7, 11:17, 12:9, 13:4, 16:8, 21:17, 29:4, 29:19, 31:6, 64:11, 71:15, 76:2, 76:4, 87:2, 88:11, 92:16, 107:12, 109:7, 109:9, 110:11, 121:8, 122:3, 123:19,</p>
--	---	--	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>134:15, 135:2, 151:14, 166:20 heard 32:8, 49:9, 77:8, 86:23, 92:17, 93:1, 94:19, 94:21, 97:17, 98:16, 99:14, 111:10, 122:2, 124:21, 137:19, 140:2, 140:8 hearings 5:17, 107:5 heart 19:17, 41:9, 48:15, 48:16, 48:17, 48:20, 49:7, 51:3, 51:6, 51:7, 52:3, 82:1, 103:21, 168:18 heartbroken 181:7 hearts 19:13, 22:12, 112:13, 148:19, 171:7 heat 85:7 heated 112:24 heaven 139:19 heavy 19:17 held 4:20, 84:5, 84:8, 92:17, 116:16, 158:8, 159:11, 164:11, 170:22, 182:6 hell 51:9 hell's 64:5 hello 3:2, 24:11,</p>	<p>28:11, 43:10, 43:11, 89:21, 95:12, 142:5, 146:4, 146:18, 172:11, 174:7, 177:1 help 11:13, 16:5, 19:24, 22:11, 23:19, 54:16, 61:19, 71:6, 71:7, 75:10, 85:11, 85:18, 89:6, 92:8, 95:5, 98:6, 98:17, 102:11, 109:13, 141:6, 150:16, 159:14, 162:14, 163:18, 175:23, 176:2, 176:19, 176:20, 177:17 helped 102:2, 102:5, 135:15, 138:5, 148:1 helpful 26:12, 35:3 helping 26:10, 46:22, 111:16, 138:12, 145:10, 157:16 helps 89:3, 112:24, 143:8 hemorrhage 55:7, 55:13 hence 26:16 her 26:22, 27:1, 33:10, 33:13, 55:12, 59:23, 59:24, 60:3, 90:18, 90:19, 90:20, 116:17, 116:18, 118:19, 139:19, 139:20,</p>	<p>155:4, 164:11, 164:12, 180:10 hereby 184:3 hey 62:17 hfsrb 3:13, 6:9, 182:8, 182:9, 182:14 hi 24:12, 95:13, 99:2, 132:20, 151:14, 156:20, 175:21, 178:24 hidden 152:16 hide 122:8, 122:9 high 10:24, 53:2, 81:1, 113:15, 176:14 high-level 53:6 high-price 157:15 high-quality 15:14, 53:17, 72:23 high-risk 53:3, 55:4, 56:15 higher 103:22, 129:16, 129:18 highest 85:2, 103:13 highly 54:3 hillside 25:8, 110:5, 124:4 him 11:13, 41:4, 63:7, 65:8, 67:3, 90:23, 98:3, 98:6,</p>	<p>125:22, 125:24, 126:6, 126:22, 126:24, 147:1, 170:21, 176:6, 181:6 hip 180:10 hired 90:8 hiring 157:12 hirsch 1:14, 4:22 his 64:10, 64:11, 94:4, 100:16, 125:18, 127:5, 146:12, 148:9 hispanic 54:12, 55:22, 56:2, 56:3, 118:7 historically 80:6 history 112:3, 115:16 hmos 76:16 hold 38:1, 40:20, 52:13, 68:3, 69:17, 105:20, 143:18, 153:4, 155:11, 159:15, 166:2 holding 65:23 holidays 146:9 home 25:6, 25:8, 25:22, 59:24, 80:18, 83:21, 98:4, 112:17, 112:19, 127:24, 139:12, 139:23, 139:24, 148:7, 158:18, 162:7,</p>
--	--	---	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>164:5, 166:6, 170:2 homeless 83:5, 83:9, 85:6 homes 37:9 honed 80:4 honest 122:6, 135:1 honestly 153:20 honey 139:20 honor 66:18, 88:14 hooked 11:19 hope 19:18, 19:21, 19:22, 23:22, 24:2, 28:4, 36:4, 65:24, 96:22, 108:22, 124:15, 135:4, 168:19, 171:23, 176:12, 176:16, 176:18 hopefully 144:16, 163:5 hoping 92:16, 94:9, 94:11 horizon 86:21 hospital's 10:10, 15:6, 21:7, 66:17, 78:10, 124:7, 124:19, 129:17 hospitals 8:22, 9:9, 9:20, 13:18, 14:5, 14:16, 16:10, 20:9, 23:5, 26:4, 26:13, 27:4,</p>	<p>27:7, 42:18, 46:1, 46:3, 46:14, 50:5, 53:8, 56:6, 56:8, 56:12, 57:1, 60:10, 62:11, 69:5, 78:18, 82:18, 82:20, 88:22, 93:5, 93:7, 112:9, 112:11, 113:19, 127:21, 129:6, 130:24, 131:1, 131:2, 131:8, 131:19, 132:6, 136:4, 136:22, 138:9, 154:14, 158:24, 159:4, 159:7, 159:19, 159:21, 160:1, 175:2, 177:3, 177:21, 178:2 hour 75:19, 138:18, 181:22 hours 37:17, 37:18, 49:10, 49:11, 49:13, 50:16, 82:22, 96:9, 112:18, 146:21 house 45:10, 94:10, 94:12, 180:8 houses 8:11, 13:9 housing 105:2 how 8:5, 11:5, 15:20, 29:6, 38:10, 38:11, 39:1, 39:6, 39:20, 41:5, 42:8, 42:12, 45:2, 48:2, 56:20, 58:14,</p>	<p>85:19, 89:23, 91:12, 92:20, 106:2, 112:18, 119:10, 133:13, 133:14, 134:2, 141:13, 146:22, 154:22, 156:13, 157:3, 157:4, 158:15, 160:2, 164:11, 164:21, 164:22, 164:23, 170:15, 170:17 however 145:14 hub 79:21, 86:1 huge 53:19, 57:4, 89:8 human 8:15, 13:11, 92:18, 105:12 humanitarian 98:12 humans 19:19 humayan 160:6, 160:14 humayun 157:20 humbling 11:4, 15:19 hundred 8:10, 13:8, 110:19 hundreds 122:16, 122:21, 131:6 hungry 147:1 hurried 133:23 hurry 133:21 hurt 143:20, 157:8 hurts 143:24</p>	<p>hymns 139:19 hypertension 55:7 hyphen 79:15 hypocrisy 99:21, 119:8</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">I</p> <hr/> <p>i'll 12:10, 13:2, 43:8, 61:22, 65:10, 89:22, 109:11, 119:14, 120:5, 134:22, 137:6, 141:9, 172:8, 176:14, 181:15 i've 24:20, 58:11, 58:12, 58:13, 61:17, 62:2, 81:14, 81:15, 85:18, 120:11, 141:11 i-c-o 62:2 ica 108:4 ice 125:16 icu 126:10, 136:17 ideally 49:10 identical 30:20 identified 103:12 identify 29:24, 105:12 idiot 49:18 ignorant 149:18 igoe 127:19, 127:20,</p>
--	---	---	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>132:1 iha 132:2 ii 4:4, 89:24 ilcs 33:18 ill 45:20, 168:12 illegal 55:22 illinois 1:1, 1:10, 1:15, 2:2, 2:8, 3:9, 3:15, 3:23, 3:24, 4:7, 4:9, 4:10, 4:22, 9:6, 10:2, 10:3, 14:3, 14:24, 15:1, 19:22, 20:15, 24:1, 28:5, 33:21, 34:8, 34:15, 38:11, 44:8, 44:10, 53:9, 55:17, 56:4, 56:13, 56:23, 64:15, 72:17, 99:8, 103:23, 119:20, 127:21, 129:22, 129:24, 130:6, 130:20, 130:21, 182:8, 182:9, 182:14, 182:16, 182:20 imagine 104:6, 104:8, 104:10 immediate 142:16, 142:19, 142:22, 166:12, 166:14, 169:20 immediately 90:9, 91:24, 125:16, 126:8, 126:22 immigrant 104:23</p>	<p>immigrants 55:23, 104:12 immigration 103:1 impact 10:13, 20:5, 20:6, 20:10, 21:5, 21:10, 24:6, 29:7, 43:19, 48:23, 57:4, 60:8, 79:19, 88:21, 89:8, 89:12, 103:11, 104:6, 105:11, 105:12, 122:7, 140:11, 140:13, 142:13 impacted 17:8, 17:22, 29:6, 122:16, 137:19, 171:11 impacting 45:4, 122:12 impacts 17:13 impaired 5:3, 5:12 imperative 48:21 imperil 168:1 implore 48:9 imploring 92:14 importance 94:21 important 6:22, 19:18, 51:15, 79:22, 81:3, 81:7, 89:4, 91:18, 92:7, 92:20, 92:24, 101:20, 116:23, 119:8, 122:3, 145:9, 159:17 importantly 62:4, 89:5</p>	<p>impoverished 53:1 impression 96:20, 136:15 improve 57:2, 143:1 in-home 128:1 in-house 54:17, 54:20, 54:22 in-patient 9:14, 14:9, 20:12, 20:17, 43:18, 45:4, 45:10, 45:18, 60:14, 72:9, 85:5, 128:13 in-patients 9:13 include 45:17, 72:1, 72:4, 73:16, 105:4 included 3:17 includes 72:2, 74:13, 75:4 including 9:20, 14:17, 16:6, 30:12, 46:11, 65:15, 68:15, 77:19, 95:21, 96:10, 131:4, 154:15 income 87:20, 98:8, 105:17, 149:5, 149:8, 152:6, 152:14 inconsistencies 20:4 incorporated 17:7 increase 23:9, 72:1 increased 32:2</p>	<p>increasingly 166:21 incredible 96:23, 136:6, 136:14 incurred 32:9 independent 54:1 independently 53:21, 113:7 indiana 127:22 indicate 104:22 indicated 45:21, 63:3, 104:3 individual 6:2, 18:11, 35:8, 45:18, 149:24 individual's 5:19, 6:4 individually 114:9 individuals 6:1, 8:19, 13:15, 17:14, 17:20, 17:22, 18:5, 18:6, 21:3, 30:13, 38:9, 68:16, 140:2, 149:15 industry 72:12, 72:24, 76:18, 84:23 ineligible 34:23 inequality 122:9 infection 170:1 influx 45:8 information 5:2, 5:19, 6:1, 6:4, 32:13,</p>
--	--	--	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>41:8, 169:15, 175:6, 175:9, 175:12, 175:15, 184:8 informed 84:1, 84:4, 175:3 initial 107:13 initially 20:1 initiate 49:4 initiated 78:13 injunctive 65:15 injury 59:14, 162:9 injustice 23:16, 104:21 inmates 44:19 innovation 122:24, 123:1 innovator 104:1 inpatient 32:4, 180:3 input 78:7 insanity 50:3, 50:12 inspiring 122:2 instead 10:15, 15:11, 31:22, 143:23, 144:15, 157:17, 179:19 institute 49:7 institution 104:9, 105:6, 106:19, 122:14, 140:22 institutions 27:18, 53:17,</p>	<p>101:5, 140:20, 158:24 instructions 7:17 insurance 5:20, 26:22, 27:2, 27:4, 46:5, 46:6, 138:10, 140:4, 154:12, 154:13, 154:16, 154:22, 155:6, 155:9, 155:10, 155:12 insured 108:1 integral 48:3 integrity 151:24, 152:1 intellectual 140:15 intelligently 151:2 intensity 56:14 intensive 73:17 intention 152:19, 152:21, 152:23, 155:23, 157:24, 158:1, 158:3, 158:10 intentions 159:8, 159:9 interest 4:13, 152:21, 184:10 interested 81:2 interesting 59:20 interests 97:20 interference 30:5 internal 47:23 interpreter 101:13</p>	<p>interpreter: 144:22, 145:8 interrupting 12:7 intervened 44:12 interventional 47:22 interview 78:22 interviews 78:19 into 6:8, 34:10, 34:17, 49:14, 50:3, 51:7, 63:5, 87:11, 87:12, 106:19, 108:4, 113:2, 125:16, 125:24, 126:8, 129:16, 132:6, 139:4, 139:19, 143:16, 159:14, 161:15, 167:5, 170:8 invasive 53:10, 76:23 invent 11:9 inventory 10:1, 14:21 invest 15:20, 16:2, 21:18, 21:24, 69:4, 73:3, 74:4, 100:2, 152:17, 158:5 investigate 65:14 investigation 34:7, 34:10, 34:14, 34:17, 48:10, 65:19, 66:2, 70:14 investigator 111:1, 111:18 investing 16:12, 21:20,</p>	<p>179:19 investment 74:12, 131:5 investments 4:4 investors 29:16, 32:23 invite 78:18 invited 175:7 involve 122:11, 149:2 involved 26:10, 26:14, 130:16, 130:18, 159:14, 175:4 iosco 163:24, 164:1, 164:2 irene 153:8 irish 90:22 irony 127:11 irreparable 48:22, 127:5 irreplaceable 27:24 ischemic 49:2, 51:12, 52:3 island 44:10 isn't 63:22, 93:24, 120:1 issue 12:16, 17:17, 17:18, 56:17, 56:18, 104:22, 149:1, 165:4 issues 11:22, 18:2, 22:14, 55:24, 56:1, 102:20, 112:21</p>
--	--	--	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>it's 6:22, 17:17, 17:18, 26:13, 31:24, 36:15, 36:17, 39:19, 45:2, 52:18, 59:1, 61:10, 65:9, 65:10, 67:16, 67:17, 67:18, 78:4, 81:7, 84:12, 93:12, 93:19, 94:15, 95:16, 97:11, 99:20, 109:5, 109:15, 110:18, 112:3, 118:21, 120:15, 122:3, 131:18, 133:10, 134:1, 134:10, 136:6, 136:24, 139:16, 139:22, 139:24, 141:1, 143:17, 143:19, 144:10, 146:13, 147:4, 150:18, 152:12, 152:13, 152:23, 153:17, 153:24, 156:12, 159:17, 160:3, 163:14, 163:15, 163:20, 164:21, 164:22, 165:12, 172:1, 177:4, 177:24, 179:4, 179:11, 179:15, 179:18, 181:15, 181:18 italian 90:22 italy 164:3 its 16:22, 21:9, 29:11, 29:16, 31:17, 31:21, 32:23, 43:24, 45:16, 56:20, 74:2, 80:10,</p>	<p>105:19, 141:22, 141:23, 145:9, 146:18, 148:18, 150:24, 167:21, 168:16, 172:22, 184:11 itself 89:19, 107:3 <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">J</p> <hr/> j-e-r-o-m-e 178:18 j-o-h-l 125:5 j-o-r-g-e 174:8 j-o-s-e-p-h 7:24 jack 121:6 january 31:11, 31:21, 32:15, 124:19 jeannie 1:3, 2:4, 3:8, 11:21 jeez 154:3 jefferson 2:7, 182:19 jeopardized 152:15 jeopardizes 80:23 jerome 178:7, 178:18 jesse 86:20 joann 109:9 job 1:22, 25:23, 62:23, 78:15, 90:7, 92:15, 113:11, 113:14, 135:18, 137:24, 157:8 jobs 23:23, 60:24,</p>	<p>80:13, 88:24, 92:9, 122:16, 150:12, 181:15 joe 38:23, 38:24, 67:1, 74:18 johl 125:5 john 23:11 join 69:19, 168:14, 172:18 joining 41:1, 41:2 joint 82:1 jones 151:13, 151:14 jorge 174:8 Josefina 137:10 Joseph 7:22, 13:5 judgment 83:24 juice 66:10 july 62:5 jump 40:8, 64:7 just 6:15, 7:6, 8:20, 9:11, 9:14, 12:16, 12:20, 13:16, 14:9, 17:18, 21:22, 26:12, 26:19, 26:21, 30:7, 38:6, 40:1, 41:9, 42:11, 44:16, 50:11, 61:10, 61:15, 62:19, 62:22, 67:3, 69:3, 69:13,</p>	<p>69:24, 72:21, 79:8, 84:19, 87:3, 87:14, 92:7, 104:24, 106:4, 109:21, 110:23, 111:10, 112:20, 114:18, 117:6, 117:8, 117:10, 117:11, 118:2, 118:8, 118:24, 120:1, 120:2, 124:8, 124:21, 128:12, 129:4, 133:6, 134:2, 136:15, 137:16, 137:23, 138:3, 138:17, 139:19, 140:12, 140:22, 141:21, 142:12, 143:22, 143:24, 147:2, 148:12, 149:12, 150:18, 151:22, 152:12, 153:10, 153:11, 155:14, 155:15, 157:14, 157:17, 161:16, 165:1, 165:9, 166:10, 167:4, 169:4, 171:18, 173:22, 174:9, 174:13, 176:11, 177:23, 179:7, 179:18, 180:10, 180:23, 181:12, 181:16 justice 21:15, 102:19 <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">K</p> <hr/> k-r-e-c-h 71:13 kaluha 148:9 karen 160:18 katherine 151:4</p>
--	---	--	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>kathleen 18:24, 47:20, 47:22, 91:13, 117:15, 118:11 kathy 109:13 keep 14:4, 23:17, 27:5, 41:18, 42:7, 42:21, 43:2, 57:14, 57:16, 57:17, 57:18, 57:20, 61:3, 61:19, 71:7, 76:4, 79:9, 79:12, 85:11, 89:19, 91:18, 91:21, 92:20, 92:24, 93:2, 94:15, 95:10, 106:4, 109:2, 117:19, 117:22, 119:14, 120:6, 128:15, 129:6, 141:14, 148:12, 152:11, 158:3, 158:6, 159:9, 161:5, 172:20, 173:20, 179:6 keeping 32:17, 112:24, 129:11, 152:2, 153:4, 158:10 kelly 171:4 kept 41:17, 104:9, 151:22 key 63:19, 73:8 kid 136:11 kiddieland 115:8 kidney 157:21 kids 60:23, 64:23,</p>	<p>148:1, 150:10, 150:11, 163:6, 163:7, 163:13, 176:17, 176:19, 176:20 kill 70:20, 70:22 kind 43:4, 69:6, 86:13, 134:18, 135:7, 139:22, 155:21, 156:3, 163:8, 164:16 kindness 152:1 kinds 55:14 knew 29:12, 32:11, 59:22, 64:8, 69:14, 69:15, 70:19, 70:21, 71:2, 71:4, 127:7, 158:14 know 6:16, 8:16, 13:12, 24:21, 28:18, 29:18, 32:19, 38:3, 41:7, 41:9, 41:11, 42:8, 42:12, 45:1, 50:9, 61:8, 62:10, 63:1, 63:17, 63:21, 64:3, 65:4, 71:14, 77:1, 77:5, 83:14, 83:22, 84:18, 86:2, 92:6, 93:4, 93:5, 93:6, 94:14, 94:18, 96:15, 97:22, 108:18, 109:5, 110:3, 110:12, 110:18, 110:20, 110:24, 111:11, 113:7,</p>	<p>114:4, 117:1, 118:1, 118:9, 118:13, 118:14, 118:15, 118:23, 122:1, 124:24, 125:11, 129:15, 133:4, 133:11, 133:17, 133:18, 133:20, 135:5, 135:6, 135:13, 135:14, 138:14, 138:17, 142:24, 143:23, 146:17, 148:5, 154:19, 154:21, 154:22, 155:17, 156:6, 156:11, 156:13, 157:9, 157:10, 160:7, 161:20, 163:12, 163:16, 165:19, 165:21, 165:22, 165:23, 166:16, 168:6, 170:19, 170:21, 171:10, 173:22, 176:3, 178:2, 181:20 knowing 64:5 knowledge 108:5, 163:4 known 31:24, 56:10, 69:7, 72:10, 73:24, 104:2 knows 38:3, 107:14 krech 71:12, 71:13, 71:17, 71:21 kushner 18:14, 18:15, 18:19, 18:22, 37:5, 62:23, 64:18, 66:19 kwame 21:13, 48:9, 52:4, 130:15,</p>	<p>144:4, 159:13 <hr/> L <hr/> l-e 89:22 l-e-n-n-o-n 76:1, 76:7 l-y-n-d-o-n 52:9 la 56:10, 179:13 labor 38:16, 54:18, 54:24, 60:10 lack 138:11, 152:6 lacking 165:4 lady 97:7, 119:6, 155:15 lake 50:1, 110:6, 116:3, 116:4, 116:7, 142:8 land 76:11 landscape 72:24, 75:8, 76:15, 79:2 language 55:24, 85:9 large 44:23, 45:7, 47:10, 78:5, 87:20, 115:20, 131:2, 181:11 larger 152:13 last 8:8, 9:9, 9:13, 14:6, 14:9, 14:11, 17:13, 22:11, 27:8, 28:19, 36:17, 37:12, 43:17, 61:6, 62:12, 73:22, 80:3,</p>
--	--	---	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>81:16, 92:17, 95:18, 97:5, 98:16, 106:13, 127:4, 130:20, 139:1, 143:21, 147:11, 147:17, 147:23, 148:3, 154:2, 155:3, 155:14, 170:19, 174:8, 178:10, 178:15 lastly 60:17 late 180:7 lately 177:17 later 5:12, 31:12, 50:19, 91:22, 99:15, 126:2, 164:19, 169:21, 170:13, 170:14, 170:15, 170:24 latest 73:22 latino 103:5, 103:9, 105:14, 139:6 law 156:3 laws 5:7 lawsuit 28:20, 35:13, 64:22, 94:4 lawyer 64:3 lead 24:3 leader 97:9, 97:15, 101:15, 101:17, 123:1 leaders 16:24, 99:10, 99:24, 101:5, 104:11, 104:22,</p>	<p>106:15 leadership 104:21 leapfrog 73:21 learn 69:13, 96:3, 96:17, 96:23, 114:7, 134:21, 134:22 learned 58:12 learning 79:23, 89:12, 171:21 least 10:11, 15:7, 24:23, 27:18, 27:19, 32:7, 77:18, 158:7 leave 19:20, 19:21, 40:1, 40:2, 99:16, 111:22, 136:16, 163:5, 164:6, 166:5 leaves 49:14 lebeau 89:21 led 8:16, 13:11 left 96:19, 109:24, 110:1, 124:18, 136:14 legal 3:16, 3:20, 104:16, 104:19, 104:23 legality 107:13 legislation 94:6, 94:9, 132:2 legislative 19:7, 92:18 legislators 101:4, 107:13</p>	<p>length 8:24, 9:10, 13:20, 14:7 lennon 75:24, 76:1, 76:6, 76:8 lent 44:10 less 10:6, 14:7, 15:3, 31:2, 68:10, 72:15, 76:23, 77:22, 91:21, 152:6, 152:14, 153:5, 153:6, 179:6 let 32:19, 33:9, 36:14, 56:24, 67:14, 67:15, 67:19, 87:11, 87:14, 100:4, 143:24, 159:18, 163:10, 165:15, 166:10, 172:1 let's 99:23, 119:14, 126:7 letter 5:12, 23:11 letting 171:18 level 54:6, 73:9, 77:22, 77:23, 98:14, 103:19, 117:24, 129:21, 142:22, 166:15 levels 103:13 levying 65:16 liar 75:14, 75:15, 75:16 license 163:17 lie 29:15, 42:2,</p>	<p>158:16 lied 41:20, 67:3, 91:19, 158:7, 159:11 life 22:9, 38:19, 51:9, 66:20, 82:5, 91:6, 96:7, 96:12, 100:21, 104:2, 104:4, 118:19, 119:22, 120:4, 125:18, 127:5, 152:5, 168:2, 177:8 life-changing 149:14 life-saving 96:7 lifeline 71:6 lifelong 119:6, 164:1, 181:16 lifestyle 105:5 lifetime 20:22 lifted 108:21 light 49:20, 49:21, 49:23, 49:24 like 14:11, 20:3, 22:6, 24:18, 26:8, 30:7, 38:13, 43:13, 49:1, 58:24, 65:11, 66:10, 67:3, 84:15, 88:22, 89:5, 89:17, 90:7, 97:8, 109:5, 115:23, 116:11, 118:13, 118:21, 121:6, 129:3,</p>
--	--	---	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>130:8, 131:1, 133:6, 133:10, 134:21, 135:24, 137:16, 139:12, 139:24, 140:21, 141:7, 141:19, 146:16, 147:2, 147:5, 150:17, 150:18, 158:17, 174:11, 175:2, 179:13, 180:23, 181:17 likely 55:11 limit 6:12 limited 45:17, 107:21 limiting 74:22 line 57:2, 72:23, 127:16, 128:8 lines 78:2, 106:22 link 39:10 links 103:19 listen 19:23, 117:19 listening 85:19, 151:16, 151:19, 151:22, 181:24 literally 108:3 litigated 39:1 litigation 35:18, 35:19, 35:24, 70:5, 70:6 little 36:6, 43:7, 44:9, 48:12, 86:11, 87:3, 90:16, 93:20,</p>	<p>118:6, 134:23, 135:5, 135:8, 137:4, 151:17, 151:24, 169:21, 174:13, 181:4 livable 123:2, 123:5 live 37:9, 60:21, 83:20, 91:6, 91:17, 102:10, 102:23, 113:5, 119:19, 120:4, 120:8, 128:19, 133:7, 136:7, 138:18, 145:13, 148:5, 150:5, 150:14, 156:5, 164:7, 165:13, 174:10 lived 101:16, 108:3, 116:3, 121:6, 126:19, 127:4, 139:3, 146:5, 146:7, 147:11 livelihoods 152:13 lives 40:23, 40:24, 55:20, 59:9, 102:24, 105:12, 108:3, 117:9, 118:14, 118:15, 118:16, 120:7, 152:12, 152:14, 152:15, 168:1, 178:3 living 22:24, 23:3, 23:24, 126:20 liz 145:4, 172:16 llc 4:4 lobbied 129:23 local 16:24, 44:13,</p>	<p>44:19, 45:6, 60:8, 72:4, 78:7, 99:10, 122:21, 149:2, 161:8, 161:11 locally 38:8, 72:17, 72:19 locals 47:4 located 4:6, 16:3, 77:14 location 77:15, 116:8 locations 80:17 lonely 61:16 long 25:4, 90:12, 176:13, 176:19, 177:9 long-distance 90:1 long-time 85:15, 156:22 longer 21:5, 28:8, 50:5 look 16:23, 24:21, 37:8, 51:21, 61:11, 113:7, 116:12, 116:16, 118:4, 126:7, 137:23, 143:11, 159:14 looked 22:12, 49:19, 51:17, 110:12, 140:18, 182:7 looking 24:3, 141:12, 141:17, 157:15, 161:3, 180:1 looks 120:2</p>	<p>loredo 47:5 lose 29:8, 57:9, 60:18, 60:24, 85:23, 95:3, 105:13, 181:14, 181:15 loses 10:12, 33:1 losing 80:9, 105:15, 115:18, 128:23 loss 10:11, 15:7, 21:9, 32:7, 79:21, 104:8, 131:16, 170:23 losses 10:8, 15:4, 15:8, 32:10, 158:20 lost 118:16, 119:21, 141:2, 158:16 lot 17:21, 27:2, 27:3, 27:10, 41:12, 58:24, 61:7, 61:13, 65:2, 82:22, 110:6, 110:24, 113:10, 113:12, 115:4, 118:6, 118:7, 121:11, 122:2, 135:12, 137:11, 137:12, 138:8, 143:1, 149:10, 163:15, 163:18, 174:20, 177:10 loud 95:15, 112:3 lounge 39:5 love 19:4, 90:23, 108:22, 114:10,</p>
---	--	--	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>133:6, 142:1, 146:18, 152:1, 179:14 loved 139:14 loves 164:10 loving 139:22, 164:11 low 26:16, 87:20, 98:8, 105:17 low-income 102:7, 175:1 lower 152:14 lowest 9:16, 14:12, 104:4 loyola 49:22, 53:11, 60:15, 64:24, 77:23, 154:4, 154:5, 160:23, 167:11, 167:14, 167:16, 179:24 loyola's 167:21 lucy 98:18 luxury 115:2, 115:7 lying 67:3, 179:5 lyndon 52:8</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">M</p> <hr/> <p>m-a-r-i-e 180:21 m-a-r-i-n 102:17 m-a-r-t-a 139:1 m-c-d-o-n-a-l-d 24:18 ma'am 18:11, 18:12,</p>	<p>36:12, 58:5 macneal 47:6, 113:14 madden 45:6, 46:2 made 6:9, 7:8, 7:13, 10:3, 14:24, 20:2, 21:22, 21:23, 29:2, 30:1, 30:8, 32:21, 34:20, 68:22, 69:1, 69:3, 69:5, 70:11, 70:16, 76:21, 77:9, 90:20, 96:15, 111:12, 111:13, 112:8, 149:8, 173:7, 181:16 madness 67:22 magazine 114:23, 116:21 magnet-status 113:19 maintain 5:18 major 104:1, 104:8, 142:15 majority 16:22, 49:12, 82:6, 83:19 make 12:9, 12:20, 22:9, 23:17, 25:12, 27:8, 48:11, 50:20, 50:23, 63:24, 70:18, 78:4, 85:1, 88:21, 93:9, 93:24, 94:3, 94:8, 97:9, 97:17, 99:8, 100:22, 113:4, 122:18, 129:4, 129:10,</p>	<p>129:12, 130:1, 133:9, 143:7, 144:14, 144:16, 149:23, 150:1, 150:2, 150:4, 150:8, 151:20, 152:10, 153:12, 157:11, 158:15, 169:5 makes 32:23, 143:12 making 28:22, 94:4, 97:18, 129:5, 131:14, 131:15, 149:11, 159:16, 173:14 malpractice 156:2 mammograms 22:19 man 109:16 manage 8:17, 13:12 managed 14:1 management 89:4, 134:21 manager 2:5, 134:17, 134:20 many 9:20, 14:16, 19:5, 19:8, 19:9, 19:10, 20:8, 20:19, 22:19, 22:22, 22:24, 23:24, 37:2, 37:14, 38:10, 38:11, 38:18, 38:19, 42:8, 53:7, 71:14, 71:24, 72:18, 77:3, 77:5, 86:1, 90:2, 92:11, 95:20, 95:23,</p>	<p>96:9, 96:10, 98:7, 98:11, 100:23, 108:19, 114:3, 126:2, 140:1, 141:2, 145:10, 145:12, 148:13, 158:17, 160:22, 161:20, 166:20, 167:5, 167:16, 169:11, 170:12, 170:16, 171:18, 173:13, 174:11, 174:22, 174:23, 175:4, 175:5, 181:8, 181:17 march 1:12, 4:20, 5:12, 19:10, 35:14, 184:17 margin 129:7 maria 101:14, 144:23 marie 180:20 marin 102:14, 102:16 marked 139:23 market 9:16, 14:11 married 90:18, 171:2 marta 138:24 mary 79:15, 98:19, 118:13, 178:24 mary-rita 79:14 mass 97:24 massive 9:5, 14:2 material 62:24 materials 4:17</p>
---	---	--	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>maternal 55:2, 55:8, 94:17</p> <p>maternity 21:7, 22:3, 22:20</p> <p>math 43:4, 86:13, 118:21</p> <p>matter 28:18, 34:11, 34:18, 38:20, 40:24, 66:1, 101:7, 114:14, 127:16, 152:5, 153:6</p> <p>mattering 21:11</p> <p>matters 65:20</p> <p>maximize 73:9</p> <p>may 6:7, 18:11, 18:12, 33:19, 34:2, 35:10, 46:6, 53:7, 56:10, 58:24, 59:12, 62:3, 71:17, 80:19, 114:8, 150:13, 150:14, 150:17, 152:12</p> <p>maybe 27:19, 93:19, 118:4, 119:7, 157:14, 164:22</p> <p>mayor 18:23, 36:21, 58:17, 62:2, 70:8, 94:4, 99:11, 109:11, 111:16, 117:13</p> <p>maywood 25:7, 44:14, 50:11, 66:14, 103:5, 103:15, 104:3, 110:4,</p>	<p>115:12, 117:7, 124:4, 139:3, 139:5, 139:6, 141:2, 169:12</p> <p>mcdonald 24:11, 24:13, 24:17, 24:20, 25:3, 28:4, 90:20</p> <p>mean 38:9, 84:21, 93:8, 143:10, 143:24, 156:1, 158:11, 165:9, 167:8, 167:10, 167:23, 168:2</p> <p>meaning 84:15, 167:18</p> <p>means 7:11, 7:12, 45:2, 48:18, 49:4, 79:20, 80:16, 93:9, 104:7, 122:6, 122:7, 122:8</p> <p>meant 169:23</p> <p>measured 56:20</p> <p>measures 74:2</p> <p>med 136:17</p> <p>media 69:3, 69:4, 117:18, 137:20, 157:7</p> <p>medicaid 9:4, 9:18, 13:24, 14:15, 20:23, 47:7, 53:2, 54:6, 56:5, 57:8, 73:23, 81:21, 84:21, 128:10, 128:21, 129:2, 129:4, 129:14, 129:18, 130:23,</p>	<p>131:6, 131:12, 158:23</p> <p>medical 7:23, 8:12, 13:7, 13:10, 14:20, 16:15, 16:21, 18:16, 25:6, 25:9, 27:15, 41:10, 44:21, 45:23, 46:14, 51:24, 53:3, 54:10, 58:20, 71:23, 72:14, 73:4, 73:15, 74:7, 75:2, 76:9, 77:19, 77:21, 77:23, 78:15, 80:5, 83:4, 92:14, 95:19, 95:23, 96:22, 108:6, 108:10, 125:19, 126:11, 142:7, 143:11, 144:11, 153:14, 165:5, 167:2, 167:12, 168:21</p> <p>medically 29:8, 33:3, 83:5</p> <p>medicare 9:18, 14:15, 20:22, 53:2, 73:23, 81:21, 84:21</p> <p>medication 18:3, 49:9, 146:13</p> <p>medications 83:7</p> <p>medicine 46:12, 47:23, 55:2, 164:24, 175:23, 176:2, 176:6, 176:7, 176:9, 176:11</p> <p>meet 16:5, 163:21</p>	<p>meeting 5:5, 19:7, 182:6</p> <p>meetings 84:5, 84:8</p> <p>meets 163:9</p> <p>mehta 142:5, 142:7</p> <p>melrose 1:15, 4:7, 4:22, 16:14, 22:1, 22:7, 23:12, 28:17, 28:20, 32:24, 35:14, 36:2, 43:15, 44:14, 50:10, 51:17, 51:19, 57:6, 62:3, 62:4, 64:16, 65:22, 66:14, 70:8, 73:5, 74:11, 74:17, 77:17, 78:6, 81:20, 82:10, 83:3, 92:13, 99:17, 100:12, 103:2, 103:4, 103:14, 103:17, 104:3, 109:22, 110:4, 117:7, 119:18, 120:11, 121:7, 123:13, 123:14, 124:4, 127:17, 133:3, 136:14, 138:1, 141:1, 142:6, 144:6, 144:24, 145:14, 146:5, 147:11, 151:6, 151:7, 156:22, 157:1, 164:2, 164:3, 164:4, 166:19, 168:18, 172:23</p> <p>melt 19:3</p> <p>melwood 58:9, 58:13,</p>
---	--	--	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>58:14, 58:18, 58:22, 59:3, 99:17 member 13:23, 85:16, 92:12, 101:1, 101:17, 106:9, 168:17, 169:10, 171:14, 171:24 members 6:9, 9:3, 19:1, 19:2, 24:1, 30:6, 56:21, 69:1, 69:2, 75:5, 79:11, 92:23, 98:9, 101:6, 102:20, 104:18, 106:13, 107:19, 128:11, 137:1, 139:13, 150:11, 150:12, 150:16, 151:6, 151:7, 181:8 memorial 77:21 men 165:4 mental 39:14, 43:20, 45:8, 45:14, 45:24, 47:2, 47:5, 82:13, 82:15, 82:17, 94:16, 105:4, 107:10, 107:22, 166:24 mentally 25:15, 45:20 mention 44:16, 62:24, 63:14, 64:10, 65:12, 94:23 mentioned 62:9, 62:13, 64:9, 76:19, 166:18 mergers 72:2, 72:4</p>	<p>messages 135:17 met 29:13, 63:8, 135:12, 167:6 methadone 20:17 mic 8:4, 8:13, 10:16, 11:14, 11:20, 11:22, 18:18, 18:19, 40:11, 123:16 mic's 52:10 microphone 47:19, 52:12, 71:19, 81:12 mics 11:24, 121:6 middle 93:23 middle-class 98:8 might 52:12, 55:11, 77:7, 118:4, 126:15, 178:3, 181:7 mike 125:5 miles 47:4, 47:7, 49:18, 77:20, 77:21, 77:23, 77:24, 93:19, 93:20, 105:2 milieu 45:19 million 10:6, 10:9, 15:3, 15:5, 27:10, 27:12, 27:13, 27:22, 32:10, 64:4, 74:15, 131:16, 131:18 millions 131:6, 158:17</p>	<p>mind 7:5, 22:7, 27:6, 36:5, 120:16, 177:16 minds 117:5 mine 39:23 minimally 53:10, 53:15 minimizing 46:22 minority 87:19 minute 49:20, 49:21, 49:22, 145:19 minutes 6:13, 6:16, 21:10, 38:20, 49:14, 49:15, 50:2, 50:17, 50:18, 50:20, 50:23, 51:2, 51:14, 59:2, 63:13, 75:20, 114:14, 116:5, 118:24, 133:10, 136:8, 142:17, 142:18, 180:14 miracle 161:16 misdiagnose 169:14 misdiagnosis 171:4 mismanagement 159:8 misrepresentation 63:21, 122:10 misrepresentatio- ns 29:1, 30:1, 70:12, 70:16, 70:18 misrepresented 158:8 misrepresenting 159:15</p>	<p>mission 102:22, 173:3 mistake 7:13, 111:12, 111:13 misunderstand 165:1 mittell 1:3, 2:4, 3:2, 3:8, 5:15, 8:3, 11:23, 12:2, 12:5, 12:8, 12:15, 17:2, 18:9, 24:8, 24:15, 28:10, 28:12, 36:4, 40:5, 43:3, 43:6, 47:16, 47:18, 52:6, 52:11, 52:20, 57:23, 58:2, 58:6, 61:21, 66:6, 71:11, 71:18, 75:17, 76:3, 79:7, 81:9, 81:11, 85:12, 86:5, 86:8, 86:11, 86:15, 88:7, 89:20, 91:11, 95:11, 97:3, 100:6, 101:9, 102:13, 105:24, 106:4, 109:3, 111:21, 114:16, 119:16, 120:9, 120:18, 120:23, 121:2, 121:13, 121:19, 123:9, 125:4, 127:18, 132:19, 132:22, 134:12, 137:8, 138:23, 142:4, 144:18, 145:17, 145:22, 146:1, 147:8, 151:12, 153:7, 156:19, 157:19, 160:9,</p>
--	---	--	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>160:15, 162:1, 163:23, 169:4, 172:3, 172:11, 174:5, 175:18, 176:22, 178:5, 178:9, 178:19, 180:5, 180:13, 180:16, 182:1 mix 16:13 mobility 116:18 mock 111:24, 112:2 modality 45:21 models 76:16 modern 73:1, 74:10 modernize 15:19 modernizing 11:5 mom 17:8, 17:10, 120:12, 164:10, 170:2 moment 117:3, 117:13, 117:14, 117:16 moms 164:20 monday 4:20, 138:19 money 22:10, 27:10, 32:23, 43:22, 63:10, 83:9, 107:16, 128:23, 130:24, 157:16, 179:14 month 99:15, 116:21, 170:14 months 63:1, 85:7, 108:5, 125:14,</p>	<p>134:20, 135:18, 141:10 montiel 160:17, 160:18 moon 63:17 moore 79:14, 79:15 morals 151:23 morbidity 55:16, 56:23 more 8:24, 9:1, 13:1, 16:9, 23:20, 26:2, 30:23, 48:1, 48:12, 52:1, 55:11, 56:7, 56:12, 62:3, 68:8, 76:10, 76:16, 80:4, 89:5, 90:15, 92:7, 100:12, 101:16, 123:22, 140:10, 140:22, 141:5, 144:11, 157:12, 158:7, 164:6, 165:17, 165:23, 166:22, 167:18, 181:15, 182:9 morning 138:19 mortality 55:16, 56:23, 103:21 mortar 21:22 most 22:14, 26:1, 36:20, 54:10, 55:16, 87:6, 87:17, 98:9, 112:15, 116:13, 117:22, 119:8, 127:14, 164:20 mother 38:2, 38:3,</p>	<p>50:13, 90:21, 98:19, 116:13, 119:1, 164:18, 180:10, 181:10 mother's 116:3, 116:17, 179:17 mothers 37:22, 38:14, 38:19, 39:19, 39:21, 55:10, 55:11, 55:17, 55:19, 55:22, 56:3, 56:22, 56:24, 57:11, 88:23 motive 64:13 mount 97:7, 119:6 mourning 170:22 move 117:12 moved 169:12 moving 32:4, 99:4, 136:24 much 22:9, 23:20, 39:20, 48:1, 62:7, 71:10, 81:8, 93:2, 97:2, 98:21, 99:4, 106:17, 113:6, 125:9, 126:12, 129:16, 129:18, 140:24, 141:2, 151:11, 158:15, 162:17, 162:18, 170:17, 176:17 multi-billion 131:4 multiple 179:17 multiplies 105:7</p>	<p>municipalities 44:18 murray 54:20 muscle 48:17, 51:6, 51:10 must 11:9, 15:20, 19:19, 31:16, 31:23, 35:21, 117:4, 117:9, 117:24, 119:10, 127:11, 149:23, 151:2, 152:6, 152:10, 156:7 myself 115:21, 117:21, 151:22, 165:3, 177:5</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">N</p> <hr/> <p>n-a-b-i-l 36:13 n-o-r-m-a 89:22 nabil 36:13 nail 181:21 naive 93:4 name 6:21, 8:8, 17:5, 24:16, 28:13, 28:14, 36:11, 36:12, 40:15, 40:17, 40:18, 43:9, 43:12, 47:21, 52:7, 52:8, 58:3, 58:4, 58:7, 61:24, 66:9, 67:12, 71:12, 81:13, 85:13, 86:19, 95:17, 95:18, 97:5, 97:6,</p>
--	---	---	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>100:10, 101:14, 102:16, 106:6, 109:5, 114:19, 119:17, 120:10, 121:17, 123:12, 125:5, 127:19, 132:23, 132:24, 134:16, 137:10, 139:1, 142:6, 144:23, 146:4, 147:10, 148:9, 151:14, 156:20, 160:18, 162:2, 163:24, 168:16, 169:6, 169:9, 172:15, 174:7, 174:8, 175:21, 178:6, 178:7, 178:10, 178:16, 178:17, 178:24, 180:18, 180:20</p> <p>named 35:3, 63:9</p> <p>names 27:7</p> <p>nation 20:19</p> <p>nation's 56:20</p> <p>national 32:3, 49:7, 56:18</p> <p>nationally 38:8, 72:8, 72:19</p> <p>nature 105:1</p> <p>navigate 79:2</p> <p>ncra 184:15</p> <p>near 26:5, 96:14, 98:22, 154:16</p> <p>nearby 77:18</p> <p>nearer 47:9</p>	<p>nearly 8:10, 13:8, 103:17, 169:3</p> <p>necessarily 167:8, 175:13</p> <p>necessary 177:5, 177:24</p> <p>necessity 80:12</p> <p>neck 132:9</p> <p>need 4:15, 22:11, 22:16, 22:17, 23:19, 33:13, 36:20, 37:21, 39:17, 40:18, 43:2, 43:24, 49:1, 56:16, 62:21, 69:10, 78:23, 79:9, 92:13, 93:7, 93:10, 93:22, 94:14, 94:17, 94:18, 95:6, 95:10, 96:7, 96:8, 99:19, 99:21, 107:2, 131:22, 132:7, 132:9, 140:23, 142:16, 142:19, 143:1, 143:7, 143:14, 144:4, 144:8, 144:12, 145:20, 150:12, 150:13, 151:9, 157:10, 159:12, 165:6, 165:11, 166:24, 168:7, 175:2, 175:16, 176:20, 180:18</p> <p>needed 45:16, 52:3, 54:19, 180:3</p> <p>needing 141:5</p> <p>needs 5:6, 5:9,</p>	<p>10:24, 15:13, 16:5, 16:16, 22:23, 25:15, 46:7, 76:14, 78:9, 83:4, 83:24, 84:19, 99:7, 103:10, 142:23, 143:18, 144:5, 144:6, 165:22, 165:23, 166:22, 167:6, 168:8, 173:19, 176:2, 176:7, 176:17, 177:12</p> <p>negative 105:1, 105:8</p> <p>neglected 83:12, 158:1</p> <p>neighbor 103:5</p> <p>neighborhood 63:22, 159:5, 159:19</p> <p>neighboring 44:5, 46:1, 124:3, 159:24</p> <p>neighbors 102:9, 102:22, 114:23, 116:21</p> <p>neither 184:8</p> <p>neonatal 107:9</p> <p>neonatologists 54:21</p> <p>neonatology 54:20</p> <p>nephews 65:1, 139:10</p> <p>nerve 179:4</p> <p>nerve-wracking 149:13</p> <p>nervous 151:17</p> <p>net 11:15, 15:23, 20:5, 20:7,</p>	<p>20:11, 21:4, 24:6, 29:10, 32:9, 33:2, 43:20, 44:23, 48:23, 52:2, 57:4, 108:7, 108:9, 129:19, 131:8, 132:5</p> <p>network 127:14</p> <p>networks 46:3</p> <p>neurologists 18:3</p> <p>never 27:24, 36:2, 41:20, 61:18, 70:17, 90:12, 115:17, 116:19, 135:9, 153:16, 153:18, 158:10, 158:12, 158:13, 161:12, 173:15, 174:15</p> <p>new 22:21, 27:2, 27:12, 29:11, 41:17, 69:13, 81:4, 93:10, 104:12, 128:24, 133:2, 134:8, 137:14, 181:19</p> <p>newborn 37:14, 73:14</p> <p>newborns 39:16</p> <p>newest 32:24</p> <p>news 115:18, 117:18, 124:18, 124:22, 137:20, 177:9</p> <p>newspaper 84:2</p> <p>next 67:16, 84:3, 118:19, 123:17, 123:20, 133:14,</p>
--	---	---	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>135:18, 142:17, 146:2, 180:17 nice 27:16, 63:6, 134:11 nice-looking 179:16 nicest 146:16 nicholas 35:4 nieces 65:1, 139:9 night 93:23, 97:24, 125:20, 155:4, 166:7 nightmare 50:11 nine 9:11, 14:7, 146:7 noah's 16:4 nobody 33:6, 41:14, 81:22, 168:3 non-profit 73:21, 131:2 non-sense 111:5 noncompliance 65:16 none 7:17, 29:11, 71:2 nor 15:23, 184:9 norma 89:21, 118:13 normal-aged 179:24 north 47:3, 110:5, 116:6, 138:18 northlake 44:14, 124:5, 141:2</p>	<p>northwest 125:20 northwestern 136:3 note 5:15, 6:7, 182:12 nothing 16:9, 88:10, 125:17, 165:2, 168:15, 179:23 notice 3:16, 3:20, 3:24, 5:5 noticed 87:18, 157:1 noticing 154:3 notification 5:7 notified 90:9 now 8:5, 8:16, 8:19, 9:11, 11:22, 12:4, 13:12, 13:15, 17:17, 24:13, 25:21, 35:2, 38:24, 40:11, 41:13, 48:1, 48:23, 49:6, 49:17, 59:23, 67:6, 67:12, 87:12, 102:14, 104:10, 108:11, 109:7, 109:21, 126:16, 133:20, 134:4, 134:6, 135:20, 137:15, 140:15, 142:17, 146:10, 149:20, 160:20, 165:16, 169:8, 177:5, 177:8, 181:4 nowhere 26:5 number 29:5, 38:7,</p>	<p>60:10, 70:3, 80:21, 86:9, 94:2, 104:22, 115:3, 129:15, 131:11, 137:18, 146:2, 153:13, 153:22, 154:2, 165:7 numbers 9:15, 14:10 nuns 127:11 nurse 37:24, 76:10, 81:14, 81:15, 112:5, 112:6, 123:12, 134:16, 134:19, 137:3, 137:4, 137:13, 138:5, 139:15, 139:19, 164:11 nurse's 109:20 nurses 8:21, 11:3, 13:17, 15:17, 19:9, 21:23, 26:9, 36:24, 38:3, 41:11, 42:5, 54:11, 54:13, 80:7, 82:4, 82:7, 91:3, 92:22, 113:12, 116:12, 116:16, 119:22, 125:19, 129:14, 135:17, 135:24, 136:9, 136:18, 137:1, 148:4, 162:14, 165:20, 165:24, 166:7, 171:8 nursing 25:8, 25:22, 46:8, 76:8, 89:9, 125:15, 127:24, 135:23, 153:14, 168:24,</p>	<p>170:7, 170:18 <hr/> O <hr/> o'hara 44:12 o-t-t-o-l-i-n-o 8:9 oak 25:8, 44:16, 56:9, 128:13 oath 68:12, 68:18, 70:12 ob 21:6, 22:3, 22:18, 38:13, 46:11, 53:5, 54:12, 54:22, 55:1, 56:11, 57:8, 57:14, 57:17, 57:18, 57:19, 77:13, 85:8, 91:4, 112:15, 112:22, 114:2, 136:17, 179:20 object 69:9, 69:10 obligation 33:23 obligingly 168:6 observation 62:19 obstacles 104:24 obstetrical 54:17, 55:6, 55:18, 56:8, 57:1, 57:6 obstetrician 52:16 obstetrics 37:17, 54:5, 55:18, 57:5, 166:13 obviously 13:3, 33:5,</p>
---	---	---	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>62:11, 64:7, 64:20, 143:15 occasion 165:17 occasions 101:24, 108:2 occupational 63:16, 94:18 october 34:5, 66:16 odd 126:21 off 6:17, 8:4, 20:18, 25:2, 25:3, 52:13, 95:15, 109:11, 119:12, 136:2, 156:9, 156:24, 178:21, 180:14 offer 15:21, 147:1 offered 30:17 offering 11:10, 20:17, 43:15, 74:24, 160:24 offers 145:12, 164:15 office 5:10, 21:13, 39:22, 50:1, 57:7, 63:12, 90:5, 123:13, 124:16, 148:8 offices 117:5 official 70:11, 70:14 officials 106:15, 130:19, 149:3, 151:4, 161:11, 172:19 often 168:2 oftentimes 167:15</p>	<p>oh 40:19, 50:15, 66:3, 121:2, 160:12, 176:23, 178:7, 178:15 okay 11:23, 12:2, 12:5, 40:11, 47:17, 47:20, 95:16, 102:14, 110:22, 111:7, 111:23, 120:21, 120:23, 121:21, 145:22, 145:23, 146:1, 146:2, 154:19, 160:15, 176:23, 178:20, 180:4 old 17:11, 24:22, 37:14, 58:15, 89:24, 90:3, 90:17, 91:7, 110:19, 110:21, 125:14, 135:22, 146:8, 165:16, 169:12, 169:19, 171:2, 177:7 older 23:3, 61:15, 141:5, 141:17, 179:12 oldest 146:24 on-site 78:19 once 8:17, 8:23, 12:13, 13:13, 13:19, 57:9, 63:13, 63:14, 75:14, 120:19, 126:10, 172:18 one 12:1, 13:1, 17:13, 23:21, 26:19, 27:8, 42:18, 44:21,</p>	<p>46:17, 50:9, 51:16, 53:8, 59:10, 62:10, 62:16, 63:8, 63:15, 63:18, 65:11, 67:18, 70:3, 70:19, 87:22, 91:6, 99:3, 99:15, 104:1, 104:8, 104:22, 109:19, 111:3, 114:2, 114:16, 115:20, 116:8, 119:10, 122:13, 125:23, 129:6, 129:7, 130:12, 131:13, 133:15, 135:10, 136:17, 137:22, 139:5, 139:7, 143:20, 147:19, 147:20, 148:5, 150:5, 152:12, 153:13, 153:23, 154:10, 154:15, 154:17, 157:21, 162:14, 164:9, 165:17, 166:12, 166:14, 170:21, 171:13, 172:7, 172:23, 174:12, 176:24 one's 135:4 one-month 139:8 ones 22:13, 51:20, 107:5, 107:6, 112:20, 147:19, 163:2, 163:10 ongoing 173:3, 173:9, 173:17, 174:1 online 51:18, 182:13 only 5:4, 5:12, 7:4,</p>	<p>16:19, 20:16, 20:21, 21:15, 59:3, 59:19, 59:21, 59:24, 60:13, 78:11, 80:11, 82:10, 82:12, 83:16, 83:21, 89:18, 93:19, 94:15, 99:3, 111:6, 119:2, 120:19, 127:9, 129:11, 135:20, 139:5, 140:5, 142:22, 143:19, 146:14, 154:10, 155:12, 160:10, 162:6, 164:9, 165:7, 165:20, 165:24, 166:12, 166:14, 167:11, 168:19, 168:20, 171:8, 177:14, 181:14 open 4:11, 18:7, 23:17, 32:17, 34:6, 34:13, 42:4, 57:14, 57:16, 57:17, 57:18, 57:19, 57:20, 61:4, 61:20, 65:19, 71:7, 85:11, 89:19, 91:18, 92:21, 92:24, 93:2, 94:15, 95:10, 107:23, 109:2, 117:20, 117:22, 119:15, 120:7, 124:15, 124:16, 128:16, 129:6, 129:11, 137:6, 145:5, 155:21, 158:3, 158:10, 159:6, 159:9, 172:20, 173:20, 176:12, 176:13, 177:20</p>
--	--	--	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>opened 8:11, 13:9, 90:4, 164:17</p> <p>openings 78:15</p> <p>operate 30:10, 68:14, 155:1, 160:2</p> <p>operated 32:6</p> <p>operates 75:3, 106:21</p> <p>operating 10:8, 10:10, 15:4, 15:6, 32:9, 169:22</p> <p>operation 27:1, 100:18, 107:4</p> <p>operator 89:23, 90:1</p> <p>operators 130:2</p> <p>ophthalmologist 26:20</p> <p>opioid 74:7, 77:13, 87:24</p> <p>opioids 20:18</p> <p>opportunities 80:14</p> <p>opportunity 3:21, 4:12, 86:22, 95:24, 96:3, 96:17, 96:23, 129:12, 177:18, 182:3</p> <p>oppose 7:10, 7:12, 115:23, 121:24, 123:3, 125:2, 138:3, 141:21, 175:16</p> <p>opposed 7:12, 66:23, 67:1, 97:1, 109:15, 127:10,</p>	<p>128:4, 135:4</p> <p>opposing 95:19, 144:24, 174:3</p> <p>opposition 106:10, 123:7</p> <p>optimum 49:8</p> <p>option 108:7, 108:9, 147:17</p> <p>options 7:9, 72:15, 107:21, 108:6, 108:10</p> <p>oral 5:23, 6:11</p> <p>order 5:16, 36:5, 39:12, 43:7, 175:12</p> <p>organ 48:20</p> <p>organization 51:24, 101:15, 102:19, 145:3, 158:19, 172:17</p> <p>organizations 72:19, 149:3, 161:7, 174:11, 175:11</p> <p>organizer 100:11, 101:1</p> <p>organizing 101:3, 102:17</p> <p>organs 8:18, 13:14</p> <p>orientation 103:1</p> <p>originally 134:19</p> <p>orosano 70:15</p> <p>orozano 35:4</p> <p>other 17:23, 23:5, 26:3, 26:13,</p>	<p>26:22, 27:7, 41:3, 45:22, 46:3, 46:13, 46:21, 51:16, 52:18, 54:22, 56:6, 59:8, 60:16, 62:14, 65:16, 66:3, 66:15, 66:19, 68:22, 70:7, 78:17, 82:13, 82:18, 83:16, 93:17, 99:18, 129:15, 131:19, 136:12, 136:21, 138:6, 140:7, 147:20, 151:9, 154:13, 158:19, 159:7, 159:19, 159:21, 160:24, 161:20, 163:2, 166:10, 173:10, 173:13, 176:19, 181:8</p> <p>others 99:12, 130:11, 130:13, 151:19, 168:12</p> <p>otherwise 48:22, 177:8, 184:11</p> <p>ottolino 7:20, 7:22, 8:5, 8:8, 8:14, 10:22, 11:9, 11:15, 12:23, 13:1, 13:5, 38:23, 67:1</p> <p>ought 112:9</p> <p>ourselves 81:23</p> <p>out 9:8, 9:13, 12:4, 18:18, 18:19, 20:4, 20:22, 32:19, 36:5, 43:7,</p>	<p>43:14, 51:2, 67:11, 67:13, 73:22, 91:23, 98:6, 109:9, 110:6, 110:11, 112:18, 117:17, 118:4, 118:8, 120:2, 120:15, 121:20, 124:23, 127:4, 131:3, 131:19, 132:9, 134:5, 134:10, 135:15, 137:2, 138:18, 149:5, 155:5, 155:7, 156:10, 157:7, 164:13, 164:14, 166:8, 167:4, 167:5, 170:1, 170:12, 174:2, 175:10, 177:19</p> <p>out-of-state 29:14</p> <p>outcome 33:5, 37:21, 38:4, 38:5, 155:23, 184:11</p> <p>outcomes 9:2, 13:22, 54:3, 72:23, 76:24, 105:1</p> <p>outpatient 9:1, 13:20, 16:13, 32:4, 72:9, 74:11, 74:16, 74:19, 75:9, 76:21, 78:1, 78:5, 78:6, 78:21, 94:23</p> <p>outrage 115:6</p> <p>outreach 95:2, 171:22</p> <p>outside 14:5, 20:8, 39:10, 44:21</p> <p>over 9:9, 14:5,</p>
--	--	---	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>18:6, 19:8, 23:23, 25:23, 26:23, 32:3, 37:12, 50:12, 51:17, 51:20, 54:5, 58:14, 58:19, 74:13, 81:14, 90:14, 92:21, 93:5, 93:12, 93:18, 110:13, 110:15, 112:8, 112:11, 116:4, 117:7, 132:12, 135:19, 137:18, 137:21, 141:3, 153:10, 155:4, 157:22, 160:19, 166:21, 172:22, 173:6, 176:8, 176:10</p> <p>over-bedding 21:5</p> <p>overall 9:12, 14:8, 53:18</p> <p>overcrowded 50:6, 167:2</p> <p>overlap 73:6</p> <p>overly 113:15</p> <p>overnight 122:13</p> <p>overpass 50:12</p> <p>oversight 132:17</p> <p>overstressed 167:3</p> <p>overstretched 167:3</p> <p>owe 120:4</p> <p>own 42:20, 55:23, 67:9, 89:6, 93:8, 117:22, 143:18, 158:1,</p>	<p>163:7, 169:1</p> <p>owner 27:12, 41:16, 41:17</p> <p>owners 27:21, 29:12, 102:8, 124:19, 157:23</p> <p>ownership 29:3, 30:4, 34:4, 35:5, 67:5, 68:5, 68:19, 69:9</p> <p>owns 75:2</p> <p>oxygen 48:19, 51:7, 51:8</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">P</p> <hr/> <p>p-a-r-k-e-r 121:22</p> <p>p-o-p-e 109:5</p> <p>pack 118:5</p> <p>package 78:24</p> <p>packed 112:15</p> <p>page 127:13</p> <p>pages 1:23</p> <p>paid 27:12, 27:23</p> <p>pain 23:6, 100:16</p> <p>palsy 17:23, 25:14, 25:19</p> <p>pantry 74:8</p> <p>paper 4:18, 129:12, 133:12</p> <p>papers 176:10</p>	<p>paradigm 76:17</p> <p>paramedic 125:24</p> <p>paramedics 59:7, 82:8, 126:22, 127:7, 167:10, 167:23, 168:5</p> <p>pardon 48:16</p> <p>parent 17:19</p> <p>parents 59:17, 150:11, 165:16, 165:21, 166:2, 166:5, 168:20, 169:1, 169:11, 169:14, 170:6</p> <p>parish 85:3</p> <p>parishioner 119:6</p> <p>park 1:13, 1:15, 4:7, 4:21, 4:22, 16:14, 22:1, 22:7, 23:12, 28:17, 28:20, 33:1, 35:14, 36:2, 43:15, 44:14, 44:15, 44:16, 50:10, 51:18, 51:19, 56:9, 57:6, 62:3, 62:4, 64:16, 65:23, 66:14, 70:8, 73:5, 74:11, 74:17, 77:17, 78:6, 81:20, 82:10, 83:3, 92:13, 99:17, 100:12, 103:2, 103:4, 103:14, 103:15, 103:17, 104:3, 106:8,</p>	<p>109:22, 110:4, 110:5, 115:12, 117:7, 119:18, 120:11, 121:7, 123:13, 123:14, 124:4, 124:5, 126:20, 127:17, 128:13, 133:3, 136:14, 141:1, 142:6, 144:7, 144:24, 145:14, 146:5, 147:11, 151:6, 151:7, 156:22, 157:1, 164:2, 164:3, 164:4, 166:19, 168:19, 172:23</p> <p>parker 121:16, 121:17, 121:21, 121:22</p> <p>parks 157:3</p> <p>part 3:24, 48:3, 48:20, 58:16, 59:5, 87:20, 87:22, 88:18, 88:24, 92:12, 143:9, 160:20, 168:18</p> <p>partaking 98:11</p> <p>partially 127:6, 127:7</p> <p>participate 54:15, 179:10</p> <p>participating 3:6, 80:2</p> <p>participation 183:1</p> <p>particular 22:3, 98:13</p> <p>particularly 35:2, 38:13</p> <p>parties 4:12, 184:9</p> <p>partner 124:10</p>
--	--	--	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>partners 122:22, 172:18 partnership 72:7, 80:1 partnerships 72:5 parts 66:14, 110:4, 112:22, 115:16 party 141:15 paso 100:11, 101:2, 101:15, 101:17, 102:17, 102:18, 103:2, 104:11, 104:19, 106:9, 106:12, 174:11 pasos 19:1 pass 129:23, 132:14, 147:2 passed 90:2, 126:18, 126:19 past 25:5, 25:23, 32:3, 141:3, 146:5 pastor 97:7 patient 26:21, 42:10, 47:14, 53:18, 53:19, 54:4, 62:22, 73:10, 73:21, 76:22, 76:23, 80:5, 126:3, 127:15, 138:15, 153:19, 155:3, 155:11 patient's 138:16 patiently 164:12 patted 164:11</p>	<p>patty 156:20 pave 75:10 pay 60:21, 102:5 payees 46:5 payers 9:5, 14:1 payment 10:4, 15:1 payments 56:5 pcc 16:2, 16:4, 42:7, 42:8, 42:9, 42:14, 57:10, 74:14, 77:10, 77:14 pcp 133:12 pechulis 81:13, 81:14, 84:14 pediatric 9:24, 14:20, 23:2, 37:11, 82:3, 82:5, 107:9, 168:22 pediatrician 181:3 pediatricians 181:5 pediatrics 22:4, 46:12, 166:15 pendency 70:5 pending 35:12, 35:22, 70:6 pennsylvania 63:11 people's 59:9 per 3:14, 15:3,</p>	<p>82:21, 82:22 percent 33:11, 51:20, 53:4, 54:5, 55:8, 60:12, 103:5, 103:6, 103:8, 103:18, 128:8, 129:13 percentage 53:2 perfect 163:20 performed 96:8 periods 73:22 persistence 108:21 person 83:12, 84:19, 113:2, 117:9, 119:23, 119:24, 179:12 personal 16:9, 48:12, 107:17 personally 108:4, 177:2 personnel 166:1, 167:2 persons 5:6, 5:8, 17:15, 17:22 perspective 73:11 pertinent 5:7 peter 62:2 ph 16:4, 17:17, 61:9, 72:6, 110:8, 110:10, 115:8, 148:9, 158:18, 163:9, 165:2, 168:21, 182:13 pharmacists 146:18</p>	<p>pharmacy 142:8, 146:15 phone 91:24 phrase 51:5 physical 165:22 physician 17:12, 24:20, 47:21, 138:15, 155:16 physicians 19:8, 26:9, 37:7, 39:1, 39:23, 46:9, 53:21, 140:9 pick 116:22 picture 56:15 piggybank 132:6 pillar 47:12 pillars 23:21 pink 7:7, 18:12, 24:9, 40:6, 43:8 pipeline 10:23, 15:12, 16:1, 19:15, 20:1, 20:4, 21:17, 21:24, 24:5, 28:21, 29:11, 29:14, 30:3, 30:19, 30:22, 31:5, 31:6, 31:12, 31:15, 31:22, 33:7, 33:9, 33:21, 33:24, 35:3, 35:6, 38:24, 41:20, 57:11, 67:2, 67:7, 67:24, 68:6, 68:23,</p>
--	---	---	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>69:12, 70:6, 70:11, 70:14, 70:19, 70:21, 72:20, 74:3, 74:23, 75:2, 78:4, 84:1, 84:7, 84:14, 87:11, 87:24, 91:19, 97:17, 99:13, 100:1, 105:9, 105:19, 109:23, 110:11, 112:12, 115:22, 117:1, 117:24, 119:4, 124:20, 127:13, 128:11, 128:18, 128:19, 128:22, 129:4, 129:5, 130:8, 131:12, 147:14, 148:21, 149:7, 149:9, 149:11, 149:16, 149:24, 150:14, 152:11, 152:17, 152:18, 152:20, 153:4, 154:17, 156:9, 156:15, 157:7, 157:15, 158:2, 161:3, 179:4 pipeline's 21:4, 24:5, 30:8, 31:1, 32:12, 32:15, 35:4, 35:9, 35:10, 35:12, 35:22, 72:24, 152:16 pipeline-westlake 4:3 place 4:24, 25:13, 25:15, 25:21, 28:2, 30:21, 31:2, 37:3, 41:3, 59:24, 68:10, 78:11, 83:16, 116:1,</p>	<p>126:24, 146:14, 146:16, 156:14, 163:20 placed 46:24 placement 44:22 places 136:12, 179:13 plains 119:20 plan 72:22, 73:1, 74:9, 75:4, 92:4, 105:19, 123:7, 138:14, 138:16, 149:12 planet 177:17 planned 156:23 planning 1:10, 3:15, 3:23, 4:11, 5:10, 31:9, 33:21, 65:13, 130:1, 130:8, 177:19 plans 5:22, 21:17, 29:12, 155:9, 155:10, 161:6 plant 87:8 played 156:10 plead 19:14 pleading 21:14, 23:24, 172:20 please 3:4, 5:15, 6:7, 6:19, 6:24, 7:1, 12:17, 12:19, 17:3, 17:4, 18:7, 21:12, 22:7, 24:9,</p>	<p>24:15, 28:12, 36:10, 40:5, 43:8, 52:4, 61:19, 76:4, 79:8, 79:12, 85:11, 86:2, 89:19, 95:9, 98:17, 123:16, 132:22, 133:24, 134:5, 153:4, 172:1, 172:20, 173:20, 182:8, 182:11 pleased 50:18, 154:20 pleasure 43:16, 111:20 plunged 125:16 plus 21:20, 122:17 pneumonia 126:9 podium 6:18, 58:10 point 20:4, 25:12, 26:19, 27:8, 37:6, 51:16, 85:17, 118:5, 136:9, 155:13, 155:14, 178:4 points 79:19, 153:11, 166:11 policies 27:2, 27:5, 30:24, 68:9, 132:11, 154:12 policy 30:19, 30:21, 30:22, 31:2, 68:7 politically 39:11 pool 112:23, 121:12 poor 22:10, 30:12,</p>	<p>68:16, 83:4, 97:16, 98:2, 159:8 poorly 48:8 pope 109:4, 109:5, 109:6, 109:9, 110:1 population 18:5, 42:10, 44:3, 47:10, 76:14, 81:19, 83:13, 87:19, 103:7, 103:18, 104:11, 129:18, 141:5 populations 128:17 portability 5:20 portfolios 131:5 position 7:15, 40:20, 63:6 positive 54:2 possible 29:22, 31:14, 99:12, 168:9, 182:10 possibly 60:18, 93:17, 151:20 posted 182:13 postpartum 164:20 potential 167:21 potentially 80:20 poverty 103:13, 103:19, 128:7, 128:8 power 34:22, 67:24,</p>
--	---	--	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>69:23, 70:4, 71:7, 71:8, 83:23, 92:5, 97:22, 108:18, 130:4, 140:15, 151:21 powers 33:16, 35:2, 65:14, 70:2, 132:3 pr 9:18 practice 24:24, 36:7, 40:21, 43:16, 54:24, 161:23, 164:24 pray 98:24, 99:7, 142:2 prayers 98:21 predecessors 88:16 predominantly 25:19, 81:19, 84:20 prefer 124:6 preferably 4:18 pregnant 57:12, 162:6 premature 37:15 prematures 39:17 premeditated 48:8 premier 122:23 premium 154:13 prenatal 16:6, 23:2, 77:10 prepare 182:11</p>	<p>prepared 6:6, 54:16, 61:24 presence 72:6, 89:6 present 2:1, 3:11, 4:13, 49:13, 138:2 presented 156:17 preserving 55:17 president 18:15, 79:16, 89:8, 121:23, 127:20 pressure 95:7 pretend 31:18 pretenses 68:1, 68:2 pretty 26:11, 113:6 prevent 10:12, 15:8, 51:10, 56:23 preventable 55:9, 105:22 prevention 105:6 previous 41:16, 94:19 previously 3:15 price 119:4 pride 81:23 primarily 105:14 primary 17:12, 46:21, 77:4, 107:8, 107:21, 124:9, 138:15 principal 35:3</p>	<p>principals 165:9 printed 4:18 prior 6:10, 6:19 priority 78:14, 173:8 privacy 5:18 private 9:5, 14:1, 24:24, 28:1, 28:7, 29:14, 32:22, 54:9, 154:13 privilege 43:16 privileges 76:11 probably 59:1, 62:4, 65:4, 139:5, 143:22, 148:15, 177:8, 178:4 problem 41:19, 45:11, 45:12, 51:12, 111:13, 111:14, 142:15, 169:20 problems 26:2, 143:1, 143:13, 143:15 procedural 72:15 procedure 94:6, 114:5 proceed 12:21 proceedings 7:17, 184:5, 184:6 process 48:6, 68:24, 69:10, 70:4, 78:13, 98:4, 163:18 prodigiously 44:1</p>	<p>producing 9:2, 13:21 product 61:6 productive 161:15 professional 57:7, 123:13, 124:16, 148:8, 184:15 professionals 80:22, 106:14, 107:7 profile 104:7 profit 84:23, 85:1, 97:19, 129:4, 129:7, 129:12, 149:6 profitable 119:5, 144:17 profits 39:13, 132:12, 143:19 program 10:5, 15:2, 15:22, 20:17, 74:2, 128:22, 128:24, 130:22, 131:10, 131:16, 132:4, 141:11, 179:10, 179:11, 179:12 programming 105:5 programs 11:11, 46:17, 74:5, 80:20, 86:2, 141:13, 180:1 progressive 74:6 project 4:14, 4:16, 100:11, 102:18, 106:9, 182:4 project's 6:10</p>
---	--	--	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>projected 10:9, 15:5 projects 98:12 promised 152:17, 158:5 promises 20:2, 173:14 promising 81:1 prop 157:24 properly 12:21 properties 28:6 proposal 11:5, 15:16, 15:19 proposals 11:1 propose 4:5 proposed 4:16, 72:22 proposes 128:11 prosperity 178:1 protect 5:17 protected 5:24, 6:4 protest 147:6 protesting 177:11 proud 28:16, 36:15, 36:18, 36:21, 37:2, 39:6, 40:4, 85:16, 125:21 proudly 66:22 prove 114:8 proven 10:24, 15:13</p>	<p>provide 6:19, 6:24, 11:3, 13:17, 15:18, 34:24, 35:7, 38:2, 39:14, 39:15, 42:10, 42:13, 44:2, 45:20, 46:4, 53:6, 53:24, 54:6, 80:13, 80:24, 123:24, 124:2, 128:20, 131:10, 145:13, 162:21, 166:1, 168:11, 173:18, 174:20, 175:9, 175:12, 175:14 provided 15:20, 20:23, 21:3, 22:22, 33:24, 41:8, 44:4, 45:15, 45:22, 46:10, 55:1, 56:14, 73:9, 129:1, 131:7, 148:4, 165:6, 173:9, 173:11, 174:15, 174:19 provider 122:23 providers 5:22, 47:14, 127:24, 130:8 provides 21:1, 34:22, 42:9, 45:23, 46:8, 46:19, 65:13, 77:10, 92:9, 106:24 providing 6:11, 8:21, 23:23, 32:16, 37:11, 46:21, 72:3, 127:15, 175:6 provision 33:20</p>	<p>proviso 17:21, 88:5, 114:24, 122:23, 174:24 proximity 80:10 psych 20:9, 20:14, 20:21, 22:2 psychiatric 22:14, 22:16, 39:16, 43:19, 47:9, 60:14, 60:15, 83:13, 83:17, 85:4, 96:8, 166:17, 166:22, 179:20, 179:23, 180:3 psychiatrist 43:13 psychiatrists 18:2 psychiatry 20:13, 43:16, 46:20 psychological 38:2 public 1:1, 1:6, 2:4, 3:6, 3:20, 4:1, 4:8, 4:11, 4:12, 4:23, 5:17, 7:3, 20:13, 28:6, 30:6, 107:5, 107:12, 129:23, 130:10, 132:21, 135:23, 177:24, 182:23 publish 114:23 published 3:16, 103:11 pulmonary 55:7, 55:13, 126:5 purchase 20:3, 28:23, 30:2, 31:3,</p>	<p>32:14, 130:17, 143:16, 149:8, 152:19, 152:20 purchased 27:21, 31:20, 32:12, 69:15 purchasing 63:3, 68:24, 69:11 purpose 131:9, 147:13, 155:8 pursuant 4:10, 34:7, 34:14 pursuing 80:15, 81:2 push 109:1 pushing 51:24 put 8:13, 10:14, 15:10, 108:13, 111:8, 117:11, 119:3, 168:7, 170:11 puts 84:10</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Q</p> <hr/> <p>qualified 16:3, 74:15, 80:21 qualify 78:24 quality 11:1, 11:2, 15:17, 41:5, 53:23, 54:2, 54:3, 55:3, 73:10, 74:1, 78:2, 173:9, 173:10, 173:18 quest 86:3 question 110:14, 111:6,</p>
---	---	---	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

111:9, 147:16 question-and-answer 12:18 questions 7:16, 148:23, 182:21, 182:23 quick 48:21, 125:12, 125:18, 127:2, 153:11 quicker 59:7, 121:15 quickly 29:21, 49:5, 72:20, 127:6, 146:20, 164:13 quietly 87:15 quite 27:16 quivering 119:13 quote 30:9, 30:15, 32:2, 33:13, 33:15, 44:24, 49:20 <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">R</p> <hr/> r-i-t-a 79:15 r-o-s-l-y-n 76:1, 76:7 race 102:24, 106:22, 115:12, 152:5, 161:9 races 43:22 radio 82:7 radiology 89:11, 89:15 raise 99:23, 104:15, 108:21 raised 106:15, 109:16,	113:6, 146:8, 146:10 rallied 117:17 rally 116:20 ran 63:5, 90:5, 130:21 range 45:15, 46:5, 82:17, 83:11 ranks 168:14 raoul 21:14, 48:10, 52:4, 130:16, 144:5, 159:12 rarely 160:22, 160:23, 160:24 rasheed 168:22 rate 128:13, 129:17 rates 103:21, 103:23, 142:19 rating 73:20, 74:1 raw 135:1 ray 19:18, 24:2 raymond 24:17, 24:19 reach 173:16 reaching 124:23 read 79:12, 116:20, 125:9, 127:12, 133:12 reading 116:24 ready 99:15	real 32:24, 108:7 realize 140:19, 140:21 realized 111:12 really 17:18, 25:15, 27:5, 37:6, 38:20, 47:19, 48:1, 52:12, 52:13, 58:15, 63:24, 64:6, 81:11, 87:10, 98:5, 112:12, 114:11, 115:22, 116:2, 117:4, 131:21, 137:22, 141:17, 147:17, 156:12, 159:14, 161:21, 176:7, 179:14, 179:16 reason 9:21, 31:16, 42:3, 97:19, 100:2, 136:4, 145:2, 158:22, 159:5, 177:3, 177:21 reasons 95:21, 96:24, 110:17, 125:8, 131:14, 145:10, 163:16 receive 48:21, 53:21, 77:7, 78:24, 84:18, 129:20, 131:5, 145:13, 163:7, 168:19 received 98:5, 108:1, 145:4, 163:3, 168:20, 168:22 receiving 10:6, 15:3, 87:9, 124:8 recent 19:8, 21:6,	72:6, 76:16 recently 26:12, 116:13, 179:1 recess 12:14, 145:19, 172:6, 172:10, 178:21, 178:22, 178:23, 180:15 recognition 129:20 recognize 165:20, 166:7 record 3:18, 6:9, 62:1, 65:10, 172:13, 178:22, 180:14, 180:17, 184:5 recorded 184:5 recorder 11:19 recording 184:7 records 72:14 recreate 115:17 recruiting 157:13 redefining 105:3 redistributed 131:1, 131:19 reduce 60:10 reducing 80:21 reduction 130:5 refer 48:9, 66:1, 182:8 reference 52:4 referral 138:6
---	--	---	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>referrals 20:8, 20:19, 154:14, 154:16 referred 123:21 referring 50:4, 154:5, 154:6 reflected 38:4 reflects 45:11 refuse 59:4 regarding 1:6, 7:16, 175:13, 175:15 regardless 102:24, 161:9 regards 175:5 region 14:18, 16:6, 82:12 region's 10:23, 15:13, 16:15 registered 184:15 regular 22:18, 54:16, 117:8 regularly 77:1 regulatory 132:3 rehab 96:10, 135:13, 136:16, 137:13 rehabilitation 46:11 rehash 65:9 reimbursed 56:13 reimburses 158:23 reinvest 16:14</p>	<p>reinvestment 16:17 reiterate 48:5, 79:8, 153:23 reject 31:10, 138:10 rejection 100:13 related 35:19, 79:19, 184:9 relates 43:22 relatives 150:16 relevant 4:14, 4:15 relied 69:8, 165:13 relief 65:16 relies 123:6 religion 97:9 religions 43:22 religious 97:15, 101:5 relocate 57:8 rely 122:17 remain 17:3, 31:2, 68:10, 124:15, 159:6 remarkable 11:4, 15:18 remarks 6:20, 6:24 remedies 65:17 remember 6:22, 24:9, 36:10, 40:6, 55:12, 57:10,</p>	<p>62:14, 112:9, 168:15, 170:7, 177:9 remembered 26:19 remoting 107:8 remove 84:9 removing 89:7 remuneration 26:16 reorganized 9:8, 14:4 repeat 34:12 replace 27:17 replacement 138:16 report 73:23, 103:11, 104:3 reporter 3:17, 6:22, 79:10, 178:13, 178:15, 180:19, 184:16 represent 91:15, 112:12, 115:1 representations 30:9, 31:4, 32:16 representative 7:18, 36:21, 36:22, 66:12, 91:13, 92:3, 108:14, 109:12, 130:12, 132:15, 167:19 representatives 18:24, 68:23, 99:10, 111:17, 131:12, 132:8 representing 122:16, 125:6</p>	<p>represents 122:20 request 10:22, 15:12, 30:7 requested 149:7 requests 65:18 require 34:20 required 31:9, 72:18, 80:17 requirement 34:2 requirements 1:9, 3:22 rerouted 50:7 research 90:21 researched 48:8 resident 106:8, 119:18, 139:3, 156:22, 157:1, 164:1, 174:10 residents 16:24, 30:11, 54:10, 54:24, 60:24, 61:1, 61:3, 62:5, 68:14, 73:1, 74:10, 102:23, 105:2 resilience 108:22 resistance 29:13 resolution 35:23 resolved 12:12, 12:13, 12:16, 77:8 resonate 148:17</p>
---	---	---	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>resource 92:10, 104:9, 130:10 resources 10:12, 15:8, 105:5, 122:24, 175:6, 175:13 respect 102:3, 151:24, 152:5, 159:22, 173:3 respectful 6:15, 12:17, 12:20, 17:3, 56:2 responders 44:11, 106:14, 167:9 response 21:4 responses 182:15 responsibility 143:17, 155:18, 156:15, 156:16 responsible 105:20, 158:9, 159:12, 159:15 responsibly 156:17 rest 53:24, 176:16 restrictions 91:10 restrictive 30:23, 68:8 result 15:2, 30:16, 32:22, 68:19, 143:11 results 10:5, 10:24, 15:14, 26:6 resume 78:21, 135:20 resurrection 27:9, 67:5 retained 124:16</p>	<p>retire 181:18 retired 111:1, 179:1 retirement 25:6 retiring 141:9 revenue-heavy 131:2 reverse 130:13, 132:11 reversed 56:16, 108:15 review 1:2, 2:3, 3:10, 4:9, 5:17, 19:23, 24:2, 24:5, 54:1, 65:12, 65:18, 66:1, 92:14, 92:19, 94:7, 99:9, 130:3, 132:13, 182:17 reviewed 54:2 revoke 33:19, 34:4 rewarded 65:12 rich 22:8, 32:22, 132:6 ride 59:2, 133:16 rides 133:20 ridge 25:8 ridiculous 127:10 right 16:12, 17:17, 20:1, 20:2, 20:3, 33:5, 51:13, 52:19, 59:12, 59:15, 60:2, 63:23,</p>	<p>67:10, 85:1, 88:5, 108:22, 116:9, 120:20, 123:17, 123:20, 126:16, 135:14, 142:8, 142:9, 142:16, 149:20, 149:23, 150:2, 150:3, 150:4, 171:9, 177:14 rights 152:8 ripple 60:19 risk 29:17, 44:19, 51:16, 51:21, 84:11, 108:11 river 27:15, 44:14, 46:2, 47:6, 75:1, 77:19, 110:4, 110:7 rock 44:9 rodeo 182:7 role 8:23, 13:19, 105:4 roll 117:7 rolling 49:16 rome 109:6 ron 18:23, 62:1, 118:12 ronald 90:20 roof 46:17 room 7:2, 7:6, 22:2, 24:23, 28:18, 45:10, 46:19, 49:13, 62:12,</p>	<p>73:18, 77:2, 82:2, 82:3, 83:1, 90:8, 91:4, 94:21, 105:13, 116:18, 118:5, 125:15, 126:8, 135:14, 136:24, 146:19, 146:22, 163:12, 163:13, 164:10, 164:13 rooms 62:16, 87:7 rosas 86:19, 86:20, 87:3 rosenberg 126:4 roslyn 75:24, 76:6, 76:8 rotate 89:10 rotations 80:3, 80:6, 81:1, 95:24 route 114:14 routinely 13:14 row 66:4 rpr 1:24 rules 3:14, 70:3 rumor 39:2 run 20:22, 93:24, 148:21 rupture 169:17 ruptured 169:23 rush 55:2, 136:2, 160:24</p>
---	--	--	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>rushed 119:21, 169:15</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">S</p> <hr/> <p>s 30:22 s-a-l-e-h 36:13 s-a-m-u-e-l 40:19 s-c-h-a-r-g 28:15 sad 58:9 safe 57:14, 119:1, 145:5, 162:21, 163:14, 163:21, 173:4 safety 11:15, 15:23, 20:4, 20:7, 20:11, 21:4, 24:6, 29:10, 33:1, 43:20, 44:23, 48:23, 52:2, 53:18, 54:4, 57:4, 73:21, 81:18, 100:22, 108:7, 108:9, 129:19, 131:8, 132:5, 173:8 said 20:1, 27:21, 31:5, 31:7, 33:13, 56:19, 64:19, 65:9, 65:10, 66:4, 92:1, 92:17, 98:18, 100:3, 106:17, 111:11, 119:7, 126:7, 126:23, 134:22, 139:17, 139:18, 139:20, 140:3, 155:16, 158:13, 161:12, 170:9,</p>	<p>170:10, 184:5 salaries 157:14 sale 31:11, 67:7, 84:24, 107:13, 108:24, 132:17 saleh 36:12, 36:13, 66:19, 168:23, 171:1, 171:4, 181:3 sam 62:1, 90:16 same 8:23, 13:19, 17:16, 19:5, 22:12, 22:13, 35:8, 49:12, 51:4, 51:5, 68:21, 82:23, 88:19, 91:21, 103:15, 159:23, 164:16 samuel 40:19, 147:10 sandwich 147:2 sarah 163:9 sat 63:12, 170:22 saturday 97:24 sav-more 182:13 save 36:3, 55:19, 71:6, 86:3, 98:18, 132:10, 177:7, 178:3 saved 108:2, 118:15, 118:19, 125:18, 142:3 saves 108:3, 120:7 saving 55:18, 59:8,</p>	<p>150:22 saw 162:15, 170:9, 177:18 say 16:11, 19:13, 31:5, 31:7, 36:1, 36:14, 39:24, 52:17, 52:22, 57:14, 57:15, 61:3, 61:17, 62:17, 88:2, 93:12, 99:2, 108:8, 110:23, 115:23, 116:11, 116:22, 118:5, 119:7, 119:13, 127:9, 133:14, 135:11, 136:9, 137:3, 137:16, 138:3, 143:3, 143:4, 143:18, 143:21, 147:7, 151:20, 152:12, 153:2, 155:22, 158:16, 160:4, 162:12, 166:6, 169:2, 169:19, 171:13, 171:14, 171:24, 177:20, 178:5 saying 10:21, 11:18, 39:22, 41:17, 99:14, 110:11, 110:18, 135:4, 135:17, 179:5, 180:23 says 21:17, 31:23, 59:20, 97:21, 119:14 scale 72:3 scan 49:15 scared 98:21, 119:1,</p>	<p>132:21, 135:8 scariest 118:23 scharg 28:11, 28:14, 33:12, 34:13, 65:3 scheduled 182:4 schedules 89:1 school 81:1, 161:8, 176:14 schools 157:2 schuler 44:16 science 8:15, 13:11 sciu 127:21, 128:4, 129:8 scooters 39:18 scope 30:17, 68:20 screenings 141:14 screens 174:22 seats 3:5, 172:14 second 2:6, 59:16, 74:9, 114:16, 148:10, 155:13, 182:13, 182:19 seconds 38:20, 55:9, 168:2 secret 64:2 section 33:23, 34:7, 34:14, 34:19, 34:21, 35:7, 35:15, 54:19,</p>
---	--	---	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>55:13, 65:12 sector 28:1, 28:7 security 124:11, 171:9 see 7:1, 18:1, 36:18, 37:2, 37:9, 44:22, 77:1, 83:1, 83:8, 87:4, 87:5, 92:11, 93:15, 93:21, 94:24, 110:16, 111:5, 115:12, 126:11, 134:7, 136:24, 146:22, 147:4, 147:18, 149:17, 155:22, 156:14, 160:22, 160:23, 160:24, 164:14, 166:8, 170:20 seeing 17:11, 71:24, 138:21 seek 47:4, 124:17 seeking 45:24, 65:15 seeks 78:11 seem 12:1, 169:2 seems 168:3 seen 9:4, 9:10, 13:24, 14:6, 48:16, 49:24, 51:5, 67:4, 72:8, 78:3, 84:7, 96:7, 96:11, 127:6, 139:9, 140:6, 157:22, 174:15 sees 66:1</p>	<p>self-satisfying 138:13 selfish 97:16 sell 158:1 senate 94:12 send 110:13, 110:15, 112:17, 112:19, 158:19 sending 84:9 sends 57:10 senior 87:21, 95:3, 102:6, 102:7, 109:16, 141:11, 141:12, 179:23 seniors 61:16, 61:17, 175:5, 175:16 sense 93:24, 149:11 sent 182:16 sentences 13:13 separated 163:6 sepsis 55:7 september 30:3, 164:8, 164:17 sequence 65:17 serena 55:12 serpico 18:23, 61:22, 62:1, 65:7, 109:11, 111:16, 118:12 serpico's 117:14</p>	<p>serve 8:23, 10:23, 15:13, 16:18, 20:13, 23:18, 28:16, 34:10, 34:17, 40:3, 79:4, 80:14, 80:18, 81:18, 85:21, 85:22, 87:20, 88:4, 88:19, 89:6, 100:3, 114:10, 124:12, 127:20, 127:23, 138:20, 143:19, 155:7, 172:24, 173:6, 173:24 served 9:22, 33:2, 37:16, 66:12, 66:15, 66:17, 67:1, 103:16, 107:19, 128:21, 129:10, 129:13 serves 14:19, 46:16, 53:1, 87:19, 87:20, 103:2, 105:14, 128:6, 128:7 service 14:13, 22:20, 22:24, 23:3, 23:22, 42:13, 44:4, 49:3, 56:11, 59:7, 59:11, 59:13, 59:15, 73:9, 73:16, 90:4, 99:9, 109:21, 110:3, 117:15, 118:15, 122:15, 148:5, 174:14, 174:19, 179:23 services 1:2, 2:2, 3:10, 4:9, 5:17, 10:1, 11:10, 14:22,</p>	<p>15:21, 16:7, 17:20, 20:5, 20:7, 20:12, 20:13, 20:23, 21:2, 21:6, 21:7, 22:3, 22:5, 30:17, 36:20, 37:18, 43:19, 43:20, 43:24, 44:2, 44:23, 45:24, 46:4, 46:8, 47:1, 47:12, 53:24, 57:5, 68:20, 72:4, 73:7, 73:8, 73:16, 73:18, 73:24, 74:8, 74:12, 74:16, 74:24, 75:8, 75:9, 77:11, 78:23, 80:5, 83:17, 85:5, 87:22, 88:1, 92:18, 103:8, 104:19, 104:23, 106:24, 107:10, 107:22, 109:22, 124:11, 124:12, 130:3, 130:5, 160:20, 160:21, 161:1, 166:2, 179:15, 180:4, 182:17 serving 30:12, 66:18, 68:16, 76:11, 80:22, 100:1, 129:18, 172:21 set 30:15, 68:18, 116:5 sets 63:23 setting 75:7, 76:21, 77:3, 89:2 seven 27:23, 100:16,</p>
--	---	---	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>134:20, 146:6, 164:20 several 60:20, 63:1, 63:4, 66:15, 66:19, 67:4, 70:7, 77:9, 83:2, 90:6, 98:20, 101:23, 108:2, 116:5, 125:6, 126:9, 135:16, 136:8, 136:12, 148:2, 154:2 severance 78:24 severely 21:2, 25:20, 45:20 sexual 102:24 shall 6:1, 6:3, 40:1 shame 179:4, 179:18 shameful 106:16, 108:15 share 6:4, 9:16, 14:12, 106:11, 134:18 shared 107:18, 173:10 shareholders 165:10 she 19:6, 26:20, 26:23, 33:13, 34:23, 55:12, 90:17, 90:18, 90:20, 90:21, 95:1, 116:18, 118:18, 120:12, 126:6, 126:8, 126:15, 139:18, 139:20, 155:5, 162:14, 162:15, 164:14, 170:4,</p>	<p>170:5 sheet 6:19, 7:7, 7:10, 18:12, 18:13, 24:10, 40:6, 43:8 sheets 149:5 shellye 81:13 shift 72:9, 76:17, 181:22 shifting 76:20 shocked 107:11 short 63:2, 73:5, 125:17, 126:4 shortage 108:11 shortcoming 98:22 shorter 8:24, 13:20 should 4:15, 5:9, 27:24, 33:6, 66:4, 70:16, 84:24, 107:3, 110:17, 129:20, 131:5, 135:11, 143:22, 149:4, 152:3, 152:15, 157:12, 157:15, 158:8, 158:9, 159:13, 159:14, 165:5, 182:16 shoulder 18:17, 18:22, 18:23 shoulders 44:2 shouldn't 21:18 shout 12:10, 12:19</p>	<p>show 49:7, 49:12, 63:24, 64:1, 114:10, 149:6, 153:5 shown 41:4, 106:13, 142:1, 142:2, 152:9 shows 32:15 shut 29:21, 31:23, 128:15, 131:14, 131:15, 158:5 shuttering 84:5 shutting 174:3 shuttle 128:12, 131:21 siblings 139:7, 170:4 sick 33:15, 37:14, 50:16, 61:14, 115:11, 139:18, 150:15, 170:24 side 16:20, 42:19, 133:9, 172:21, 177:10 siege 87:13 sifting 126:2 sign 7:4, 7:7, 169:8 sign-in 4:23, 6:19 signature-5tmlq 184:13 signed 7:1, 35:4, 152:24, 169:6 significant 10:2, 10:11, 14:23, 15:7,</p>	<p>32:7, 60:8, 73:6, 77:9, 116:23 signs 126:21 silently 171:17 similar 85:19, 107:17, 128:14 similarly 51:3 simon 23:11 simple 10:23, 15:12, 98:8 simply 10:14, 15:10, 56:8, 99:6, 108:13, 121:24, 136:15, 167:14, 174:18 sin 119:11 since 8:12, 10:11, 13:10, 15:7, 15:22, 20:13, 21:6, 32:7, 36:17, 41:13, 59:21, 66:13, 66:16, 109:17, 120:11, 124:18, 146:7, 148:10, 165:14, 180:24 sincere 19:22, 26:9 sing 139:19 singing 139:21 single 136:17, 139:7 sir 10:20, 11:7, 43:1, 71:15, 106:1, 106:5</p>
---	--	---	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>sister 50:14, 73:4, 135:3, 170:13 sister-in-laws 181:11 sisters 22:11, 91:1 sit 39:5, 148:12, 149:15, 150:1, 157:17, 166:2 site 89:7 sites 81:4 sitting 85:19, 86:18, 115:21, 118:18, 126:15, 136:5, 151:16, 151:18, 153:10 situation 33:13, 33:17, 55:12, 168:1 six 9:11, 14:7, 137:15, 155:3, 164:3, 169:12, 177:6, 181:2 size 4:18 sleep 166:7 sleeping 83:10 slow 178:13 small 44:3, 47:9, 93:17, 117:23, 142:22, 170:2 smooth 73:13 sneak 117:10 snow 19:3, 19:5 snowing 133:16</p>	<p>snuff 155:6 social 46:9, 46:15, 102:19, 106:22, 137:20, 157:7, 179:2 socially 29:7, 33:3 society 167:6 socioeconomic 43:23, 103:1 sold 27:9, 28:1, 29:21, 85:2 sole 97:19 solidarity 23:15 solutions 76:23 some 7:9, 12:11, 13:3, 31:16, 46:7, 64:13, 72:1, 103:3, 103:15, 107:20, 107:24, 112:9, 124:1, 124:5, 126:11, 126:21, 135:13, 147:2, 155:17, 155:18, 156:2, 156:14, 158:22, 161:16, 163:15, 170:5, 173:24 somebody 11:13, 97:24, 98:24, 99:1, 133:18, 177:23 somehow 142:2 someone 59:11, 59:14, 146:21, 179:18, 181:19 someone's 79:8, 79:13,</p>	<p>152:3 something 69:13, 77:1, 116:23, 127:12, 133:15, 140:17, 146:21, 147:1, 149:11, 153:3, 158:17, 160:5, 168:3, 181:7 sometimes 50:2 somewhat 47:8 somewhere 50:18, 62:18, 140:16, 144:16 son 17:11, 40:24, 100:16, 100:20, 100:21, 125:13, 125:22, 146:23, 148:10, 168:22, 170:24, 171:1 sons 146:11 soon 31:13, 141:9, 168:9 sorry 38:22, 112:7, 119:4, 121:3, 151:16, 152:20, 160:9, 160:10, 162:24, 178:8, 178:13 sorts 85:22 soul 66:21, 168:18 sound 58:24 sounds 129:3 sources 138:6 south 47:6, 116:6, 146:8, 177:10</p>	<p>space 162:21, 163:11, 163:21 spaces 145:12 spandex 179:13 spanish 90:22, 100:9, 134:9, 134:11, 144:21, 145:7, 147:21, 147:24, 148:7, 148:11, 148:19, 148:23, 148:24, 149:1, 149:9, 149:14, 149:21, 150:6, 150:20, 150:23, 151:11 spanish-speaking 53:4 speak 7:5, 7:7, 17:10, 19:10, 19:12, 19:21, 52:22, 59:16, 85:17, 86:22, 86:24, 102:15, 106:10, 112:12, 118:19, 120:22, 125:7, 151:19, 169:6, 169:8, 172:4, 172:7, 175:19, 177:2, 178:20 speaker 8:2, 8:7, 8:13, 10:16, 10:17, 10:19, 10:20, 11:7, 11:13, 11:17, 11:19, 11:21, 11:24, 12:3, 12:6, 12:22, 12:24, 18:18, 18:20, 24:12, 24:14, 25:2, 28:3, 33:10, 34:12,</p>
---	---	---	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>40:8, 40:15, 40:18, 43:1, 43:4, 43:11, 44:7, 46:18, 50:22, 52:10, 54:14, 55:21, 57:16, 57:17, 57:22, 60:2, 61:5, 65:6, 67:10, 67:21, 70:23, 70:24, 71:1, 71:3, 71:15, 71:20, 75:14, 75:16, 75:18, 75:19, 75:22, 76:2, 76:4, 84:12, 86:6, 86:10, 86:13, 86:17, 87:2, 88:8, 101:10, 106:2, 108:16, 109:24, 110:8, 113:16, 113:20, 113:23, 114:20, 114:21, 115:10, 115:14, 115:15, 116:9, 121:9, 123:15, 123:19, 131:23, 141:20, 145:20, 145:23, 160:4, 160:7, 160:11, 160:12, 162:19, 172:12, 176:24, 180:6, 180:11 speaker's 6:18 speakers 12:19, 172:6, 174:6, 176:23 speaking 17:19, 52:17, 58:17, 58:18, 67:23, 79:9, 79:13, 95:19, 100:9, 115:20, 120:19, 121:3, 134:9, 134:11,</p>	<p>144:20, 145:7, 147:14, 147:21, 147:23, 148:7, 148:11, 148:19, 148:23, 148:24, 149:1, 149:9, 149:14, 149:20, 150:6, 150:19, 150:23, 151:11, 160:11, 177:19 speaks 12:18 special 5:6, 5:8, 28:16, 37:15, 42:9, 102:1, 146:15 specialist 47:23, 48:13, 126:5 specialists 26:14 specific 30:1, 77:6 specifically 20:12, 34:8, 34:15, 68:6, 87:5, 128:6 speech 156:23 speed 49:1 speeding 116:7 spell 6:20, 24:16, 28:13, 36:11, 43:9, 52:7, 58:3, 58:4, 132:23, 178:9, 178:11, 180:18 spend 64:4, 170:5 spending 15:10, 115:2 spent 126:9, 170:13, 170:16, 180:9</p>	<p>spiritual 97:10, 97:12 spoke 37:5, 60:17, 87:4, 152:23, 155:15, 158:11 spoken 19:7, 89:9 sponsored 132:15 spouse 154:17 springfield 2:8, 91:24, 182:20 src 4:4 st 31:22 stabilizing 141:6 stabling 140:23, 140:24 stack 113:8 staff 18:16, 19:9, 26:4, 26:5, 26:8, 41:10, 46:9, 53:5, 54:11, 69:2, 79:4, 84:1, 84:6, 84:15, 96:4, 96:18, 100:22, 119:22, 124:10, 125:15, 125:19, 126:4, 126:11, 140:9, 141:23, 148:4, 148:19, 153:9, 153:14, 153:15, 153:21, 154:6, 159:3, 159:23, 159:24, 168:24, 170:7, 170:18, 171:9, 173:7 stake 149:10, 152:13</p>	<p>stakeholder 165:8 stakeholders 165:8 stamp 117:11 stand 18:16, 18:22, 23:14, 64:16, 69:16, 106:12, 109:1, 119:14, 120:5, 129:9, 137:10, 169:18, 172:5 standards 156:4 standing 106:23, 108:17, 162:11, 169:22 standpoint 59:16, 73:10, 165:7, 165:8 stands 86:3, 128:4 stars 63:18 start 13:2, 21:20, 43:14, 109:11, 139:20, 157:15, 180:23 started 89:23, 135:10, 135:21, 137:13, 154:19 starting 146:6 state 5:7, 6:20, 10:6, 15:4, 18:23, 20:15, 24:15, 28:5, 28:12, 36:11, 39:10, 43:8, 45:6, 52:7, 56:12, 56:17, 56:22, 58:2, 58:4, 64:15,</p>
---	---	--	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>66:12, 70:11, 70:13, 87:12, 91:13, 99:9, 129:8, 129:20, 132:10, 132:23, 151:4, 159:13, 161:17, 180:18 state's 21:13, 24:4, 45:11, 128:21, 144:4 stated 61:12, 68:7, 68:9, 74:18, 99:8, 131:13, 132:7, 167:13 statement 20:5, 21:5, 24:6, 69:3, 97:9, 149:8 statements 28:23, 29:2, 34:9, 34:16, 34:20, 34:24, 48:2, 68:21, 68:24, 69:6, 69:8, 114:17, 149:6 states 34:9, 34:16, 35:16, 55:5, 85:5 statistics 38:8, 49:6, 49:12 status 103:1, 104:16, 106:22 stay 8:24, 9:10, 13:20, 14:7, 18:7, 18:21, 35:21, 40:2, 93:10, 96:20, 99:19, 99:22, 137:5, 144:13, 148:2, 169:24 stayed 42:4, 90:10</p>	<p>stays 176:12, 176:16 step 71:9, 129:9, 130:16, 144:5, 144:6 steps 94:3 sticking 132:8 still 91:9, 93:6, 109:23, 126:11, 131:17, 131:18, 135:11, 164:6, 164:15, 164:20 stomach 100:16, 115:11, 115:24 stone 99:17, 103:14, 110:5, 141:1 stood 19:5, 70:8 stop 36:2, 67:22, 67:24, 92:1, 92:5, 92:15, 94:5, 94:6, 94:10, 124:23, 130:14, 132:13, 151:9 stores 44:13 stories 89:13, 89:18, 107:7, 122:2, 125:13, 148:13, 148:17 story 59:20, 107:17, 126:17, 134:18, 164:10 straightening 12:4 strain 9:19, 14:16 strategic 28:6</p>	<p>strategically 46:24 strategist 71:23 strategy 71:21 stream 132:5 streamline 118:1 street 1:14, 2:7, 4:22, 40:24, 50:1, 64:7, 83:15, 116:4, 116:7, 118:24, 142:9, 182:19 streets 83:10 stress 168:5 stretch 47:4 stripped 130:3, 132:2 stroke 21:11, 49:2, 49:11, 49:14, 50:6, 50:14, 50:20, 62:21, 81:24, 82:11, 94:20, 96:10, 103:22, 126:23, 127:3, 166:12 stroke-accredited 49:3 stroke-certified 21:9 strokes 22:6, 23:6 strong 73:19, 96:20 stronger 102:22 strongly 66:23, 147:6 struggle 117:23</p>	<p>struggled 141:3 struggling 22:9, 104:14, 132:5 student 95:19 students 54:10, 79:24, 80:2, 80:4, 80:10, 80:13, 80:16, 80:19, 81:1, 81:5, 88:15, 88:16, 88:20, 88:23, 89:4, 89:10, 89:11, 89:12, 95:23, 96:22 studied 140:18 study 158:13 stuff 176:11 stupid 119:10 sub 73:24, 84:6, 85:10, 135:3 subject 35:13, 35:18 submit 6:7 submitted 3:16, 29:4, 30:3, 34:9, 34:16, 35:8, 114:17 submitting 5:23, 79:19 subsidies 131:7 subspecialties 73:15 substantiating 23:13 suburb 125:20</p>
---	---	--	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>suburban 7:23, 13:7, 16:15, 16:21, 27:14, 42:18, 45:12, 49:18, 53:12, 54:23, 57:12, 67:17, 71:22, 73:4, 73:7, 73:12, 73:19, 75:1, 75:20, 76:9, 77:12, 77:14, 77:20, 78:15, 93:13, 101:10, 102:18, 103:20, 103:23, 106:9, 110:14, 110:15, 110:21, 112:6, 114:12, 114:13, 121:15, 128:13, 128:14, 128:16, 134:19, 179:1, 180:2 suburban's 74:5, 112:15, 135:6 suburbs 16:19, 44:6, 72:18, 103:3, 103:14, 104:5, 105:17, 106:20, 114:24, 131:3, 172:22, 172:23 success 89:13, 89:17 successful 38:5, 89:3 such 5:21, 22:14, 23:6, 26:5, 32:1, 44:12, 46:1, 55:24, 72:5, 74:5, 78:21, 122:11, 174:17 sudden 26:22, 31:16, 31:23, 51:12</p>	<p>sued 156:2 suffer 25:18 suffering 87:1 sufficient 6:14, 46:6 suits 117:6, 150:9 summary 23:14 summer 85:7 sun 63:17 supplemental 130:23, 131:10 support 7:10, 7:11, 17:7, 42:6, 44:10, 45:24, 46:15, 52:17, 52:22, 56:22, 64:21, 78:21, 81:4, 82:5, 82:6, 94:11, 94:12, 123:6, 124:14, 138:11, 144:10, 144:12, 144:23, 145:13, 145:16, 158:21, 162:24, 166:4, 173:3, 174:1, 174:3 supported 4:16, 77:18, 94:4 supporters 79:17 supporting 42:23, 74:5, 151:2, 184:7 supportive 65:24, 132:8 supposed 86:6, 112:17, 126:14, 131:7,</p>	<p>133:17, 133:20 sure 12:20, 37:4, 38:24, 45:2, 48:15, 79:10, 90:20, 93:9, 94:3, 94:4, 94:8, 122:18, 134:22, 143:7, 143:12, 148:17, 149:7, 169:5, 170:10, 172:7, 173:8, 175:19 surge 136:17 surgeon 153:17, 153:18 surgeons 8:18, 13:13 surgeries 23:7, 96:7, 101:22, 148:3, 179:17 surgery 46:12, 66:5, 120:14, 155:4, 169:20, 170:8, 177:6, 177:7 surgical 9:24, 14:20, 73:15, 74:8, 89:11 surprise 9:15, 14:11, 103:6 surprised 107:11, 118:3 surrounding 37:23, 81:20, 83:2, 98:7, 103:3, 120:3 surrounds 138:1 survival 142:19 survive 131:22 survivor 145:1, 162:16</p>	<p>survivors 145:11 susan 88:12 suspend 70:4 sustainable 123:2, 123:4 swimming 121:12 switchboard 90:7 swore 68:12, 68:18 sworn 33:24, 68:6 symptom 49:11 symptoms 126:21, 126:23 sync 136:20 syndrome 17:23, 25:13, 25:19 system 9:6, 9:8, 14:2, 14:4, 20:11, 45:9, 48:4, 79:22, 97:13, 113:3, 132:11, 133:4, 138:11 systematic 17:15 systems 78:18, 131:3, 132:6</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">T</p> <hr/> <p>t-a-y-l-o-r 52:9 t-h-u-r-m-o-n-d 178:12, 178:14 t-i-n-t-o-r-i 119:18 table 169:23 tag 119:4</p>
---	--	--	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>take 3:5, 4:24, 8:4, 13:19, 20:19, 27:4, 33:14, 36:18, 38:7, 39:16, 43:8, 47:10, 50:3, 52:13, 59:3, 59:11, 61:17, 61:22, 62:7, 62:17, 62:18, 66:11, 67:13, 79:10, 83:6, 87:13, 87:22, 97:11, 104:21, 114:15, 118:22, 122:7, 126:7, 128:12, 129:16, 131:20, 133:19, 134:5, 134:10, 138:8, 138:10, 138:11, 138:16, 140:6, 143:3, 143:4, 143:15, 144:13, 145:18, 148:15, 149:19, 154:23, 154:24, 155:9, 155:10, 157:4, 165:4, 166:24, 170:4, 174:16, 176:23, 177:13, 178:21, 178:22, 182:11</p> <p>taken 12:14, 94:2, 141:24, 172:10, 178:23, 180:15</p> <p>takes 20:8, 50:2, 75:19, 83:19, 96:4</p> <p>taking 9:8, 22:1, 88:1, 96:5, 142:21, 143:2, 154:11, 177:15</p> <p>talk 19:19, 39:6,</p>	<p>41:9, 47:19, 50:24, 51:1, 91:16, 101:2, 136:19</p> <p>talked 62:20, 63:16, 63:17, 64:18, 88:16, 92:20, 122:1, 132:21, 174:12</p> <p>talking 42:7, 58:10, 109:22, 112:10, 133:5, 149:24</p> <p>tamara 118:14, 132:24</p> <p>targeted 39:9</p> <p>taught 151:23</p> <p>tax 15:2</p> <p>taxes 157:1, 158:19</p> <p>taylor 52:8, 52:15, 52:21, 54:15, 55:22</p> <p>teach 96:4, 114:7</p> <p>teacher 88:12</p> <p>team 95:22, 114:6, 114:7, 114:9, 135:7, 135:12, 135:19, 136:17, 163:13</p> <p>teaming 72:6</p> <p>technical 12:4, 12:11</p> <p>technician 58:20</p> <p>techniques 78:22</p> <p>technological 75:10</p>	<p>technologist 89:14, 89:15</p> <p>technology 72:11, 89:11</p> <p>techs 136:18</p> <p>telephone 5:10</p> <p>tell 41:24, 50:15, 58:14, 58:15, 66:24, 89:22, 92:24, 107:8, 114:1, 118:17, 125:12, 126:17, 138:7, 141:13, 149:12, 153:20, 155:20, 164:10, 164:23, 165:15, 166:10, 170:15, 171:5</p> <p>telling 26:20, 87:23, 148:13, 177:16</p> <p>tells 112:3, 153:2</p> <p>ten 51:14, 59:9</p> <p>tenant 41:16, 67:6, 112:8</p> <p>tended 96:9</p> <p>tens 33:2</p> <p>tentatively 182:4</p> <p>term 162:10</p> <p>terminal 19:20</p> <p>terms 53:23</p> <p>terrible 33:17, 97:16</p> <p>terribly 18:5</p> <p>terrific 25:23, 168:23</p>	<p>test 90:2</p> <p>testified 130:11</p> <p>testify 92:22, 182:2</p> <p>testimony 5:24, 6:7, 6:12, 16:8, 29:5, 107:6, 162:4</p> <p>testing 121:17, 121:18</p> <p>text 6:6, 6:8, 61:24</p> <p>th 31:11, 31:21, 32:15, 62:5, 62:6, 116:4, 124:19, 124:21, 133:7, 135:16, 182:5, 182:14</p> <p>than 5:12, 14:7, 16:10, 23:20, 26:6, 29:16, 30:23, 31:2, 39:20, 55:11, 68:8, 68:10, 76:10, 77:22, 80:4, 88:9, 91:21, 92:7, 100:12, 101:16, 103:22, 121:15, 123:22, 140:10, 140:22, 144:11, 152:13, 153:6, 157:13, 164:6, 165:17, 165:23, 179:6, 181:16</p> <p>thank 3:5, 3:13, 12:21, 16:24, 18:8, 18:9, 24:7, 28:9, 36:3, 36:12, 37:4, 40:10, 40:13, 41:7,</p>
--	---	---	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>41:8, 42:23, 42:24, 47:15, 52:5, 58:6, 61:20, 65:23, 66:2, 71:10, 71:20, 75:11, 75:24, 76:5, 79:5, 79:17, 81:8, 81:10, 86:4, 86:19, 86:22, 88:5, 90:16, 95:12, 96:21, 97:1, 101:8, 102:12, 102:14, 105:23, 109:2, 114:15, 120:8, 123:8, 125:3, 125:9, 126:12, 132:18, 134:9, 137:6, 138:21, 141:22, 141:24, 144:17, 147:7, 151:10, 153:6, 157:18, 160:6, 160:14, 161:19, 161:22, 161:24, 162:12, 162:16, 162:18, 169:2, 169:3, 171:1, 171:13, 171:19, 171:22, 172:2, 172:9, 173:20, 174:2, 174:4, 176:20, 178:4, 180:5, 180:6, 181:23, 182:1, 182:24 thanking 43:14, 109:11 thanks 57:21, 99:21, 130:6, 162:10, 171:4 that's 6:21, 17:18, 21:19, 27:5, 27:10, 42:2, 45:2, 50:11,</p>	<p>62:13, 62:18, 63:19, 64:6, 65:9, 66:5, 67:10, 68:1, 69:7, 92:13, 104:13, 110:6, 110:19, 111:9, 111:14, 119:12, 120:6, 124:15, 125:10, 134:8, 143:5, 143:14, 147:6, 152:24, 155:13, 156:18, 159:10, 162:11, 171:21, 174:8, 174:17, 176:14, 178:15, 180:4 them 11:3, 19:14, 19:20, 21:21, 25:14, 27:22, 33:14, 36:8, 37:20, 38:1, 56:11, 60:23, 61:18, 62:18, 64:11, 64:15, 67:1, 67:15, 67:20, 68:3, 69:17, 69:22, 77:1, 77:8, 78:18, 83:7, 83:14, 83:15, 85:22, 87:6, 87:9, 88:3, 88:22, 89:3, 91:2, 93:1, 93:9, 93:18, 96:14, 98:23, 99:20, 100:4, 102:21, 105:20, 111:6, 111:10, 112:8, 112:19, 115:12, 115:20, 116:15, 117:17, 118:14, 119:5, 125:22, 138:13, 140:6, 141:24, 143:3, 147:16,</p>	<p>148:5, 150:5, 150:14, 150:18, 151:21, 155:1, 155:6, 155:10, 155:21, 157:4, 157:5, 162:10, 163:16, 163:18, 165:11, 165:20, 166:3, 167:5, 168:7, 168:24, 170:8, 170:21, 173:12, 174:2, 175:4, 177:15, 181:20, 181:21 themselves 125:8, 156:17, 167:16 then 8:12, 13:10, 24:24, 27:11, 31:11, 90:3, 90:17, 98:4, 98:9, 103:6, 110:3, 134:1, 152:22, 152:24, 159:23, 170:5 therapy 21:2, 45:19 there's 14:11, 31:18, 60:17, 61:1, 63:20, 64:1, 64:12, 73:6, 84:7, 118:19, 118:20, 133:22, 135:5, 135:13, 136:24, 142:18, 157:11, 159:8, 163:2, 169:5 thereby 45:4, 46:22 therefore 35:21 these 7:16, 9:15, 9:17, 10:12, 14:10, 14:13, 15:8, 22:13,</p>	<p>25:18, 26:3, 26:14, 26:16, 27:2, 27:6, 28:7, 31:4, 35:2, 37:19, 37:22, 45:16, 46:8, 50:6, 51:14, 65:19, 67:8, 67:20, 68:21, 69:5, 69:8, 72:4, 72:16, 77:6, 78:23, 81:7, 82:20, 84:16, 86:7, 87:15, 96:13, 96:24, 107:5, 108:10, 112:10, 131:3, 132:11, 143:5, 143:15, 149:15, 151:1, 154:3, 155:9, 157:15, 171:6, 171:10, 173:22, 174:24, 175:1, 177:13 they'll 131:23 they're 11:21, 12:3, 25:20, 41:21, 42:12, 42:16, 50:6, 59:7, 67:13, 82:19, 84:9, 87:10, 91:22, 98:21, 99:15, 110:16, 110:18, 110:21, 112:11, 113:13, 113:18, 113:23, 118:3, 120:15, 128:15, 135:20, 136:10, 144:2, 147:15, 149:17, 149:18, 149:20, 155:9, 157:13, 159:24, 161:23, 163:10, 166:3, 167:5, 167:18,</p>
---	---	---	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>181:4, 181:6 they've 26:4, 63:7 thing 27:5, 47:17, 61:6, 63:19, 65:11, 66:3, 104:8, 108:23, 119:8, 156:3, 156:10 things 20:2, 22:6, 31:24, 61:23, 62:8, 62:10, 63:8, 70:1, 86:7, 92:11, 94:23, 95:8, 115:19, 116:11, 119:3, 125:23, 130:12, 135:2, 153:18, 155:21, 156:13, 164:21, 164:22, 165:15, 171:18, 171:22, 174:12, 174:20 think 12:15, 27:3, 27:17, 27:24, 48:5, 50:17, 62:15, 63:7, 63:10, 63:19, 64:12, 99:19, 102:9, 115:22, 117:2, 118:3, 119:10, 125:23, 140:10, 141:10, 142:21, 143:7, 144:3, 144:7, 144:11, 144:12, 150:14, 150:15, 155:17, 155:18, 155:19, 155:20, 155:21, 156:1, 156:9, 156:15, 157:9, 159:17, 160:3, 168:3, 177:22, 177:24, 179:3, 179:11,</p>	<p>179:17, 179:22 thinking 117:24, 125:19, 151:18, 153:11 third 51:12, 126:17, 155:14, 169:13, 170:3 thoroughly 53:22 those 6:6, 6:11, 6:24, 22:24, 23:3, 27:4, 27:17, 29:1, 37:21, 38:5, 38:14, 38:19, 44:4, 46:6, 49:12, 60:20, 60:24, 69:5, 72:1, 77:8, 86:24, 91:18, 92:22, 95:4, 95:7, 107:17, 109:4, 112:7, 112:19, 118:10, 119:3, 125:19, 128:21, 136:3, 138:8, 138:12, 140:11, 164:5, 164:19, 166:24, 168:6, 176:17 though 31:4, 33:24, 88:9, 120:19, 146:8 thought 63:22, 64:23, 115:21, 116:18, 117:4, 117:9, 119:9, 125:17, 156:23, 160:12, 161:4 thoughts 106:11 thousands 29:7, 33:2, 127:23</p>	<p>three 6:13, 14:6, 37:23, 39:19, 41:12, 55:10, 73:2, 77:24, 80:4, 82:21, 93:17, 99:2, 113:6, 123:24, 125:12, 133:6, 137:21, 153:11, 170:2 thrilled 179:12 thriving 123:4 through 4:24, 22:9, 29:2, 30:13, 42:14, 68:17, 72:13, 74:3, 74:11, 76:11, 77:16, 81:24, 82:8, 84:2, 84:4, 87:7, 89:10, 101:12, 104:17, 116:17, 130:21, 137:20, 138:19, 139:16, 144:22, 145:8, 157:7, 163:18, 173:1, 174:23, 176:4, 176:5 throughout 92:23, 111:3 throw 83:15 thrown 84:16 thurmond 177:1, 178:7, 178:8, 178:11, 178:14, 178:17 thus 28:7 time 6:13, 6:14, 6:15, 13:1, 22:12, 23:8,</p>	<p>25:4, 31:20, 31:21, 32:20, 42:4, 48:17, 49:8, 51:4, 51:6, 51:9, 51:10, 51:11, 51:14, 60:16, 62:7, 62:21, 63:16, 63:18, 67:4, 75:12, 79:5, 82:23, 88:24, 89:3, 96:4, 96:15, 97:21, 98:10, 98:24, 100:15, 100:20, 105:3, 107:2, 111:3, 112:16, 113:5, 113:11, 114:15, 123:23, 126:5, 132:21, 133:14, 137:2, 139:4, 139:6, 139:11, 147:3, 148:16, 156:24, 158:13, 158:18, 160:3, 170:5, 175:24, 176:1, 176:9, 176:13, 176:19, 180:3 timely 57:13 times 37:14, 38:19, 55:10, 82:21, 100:23, 112:16, 124:1, 133:6, 146:23, 170:6, 170:16, 173:9, 175:4, 182:12 tina 114:19, 114:21, 125:8 tintori 119:17 tiny 93:20 tired 86:17</p>
--	--	--	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>title 174:16 today 3:11, 6:13, 8:16, 13:12, 16:8, 19:12, 19:17, 29:5, 40:14, 41:8, 55:15, 63:20, 65:24, 67:23, 68:3, 71:5, 71:24, 73:6, 75:12, 78:1, 85:17, 86:22, 86:23, 90:21, 92:16, 100:13, 101:2, 101:17, 106:10, 106:13, 107:6, 107:18, 108:20, 109:1, 112:10, 115:2, 115:5, 116:12, 118:9, 119:12, 125:7, 125:8, 125:21, 130:11, 136:5, 138:3, 142:6, 144:23, 147:13, 148:18, 150:7, 150:21, 152:4, 171:2, 177:18 today's 3:6, 3:8, 3:14, 3:17, 6:8, 7:17, 27:12, 36:7, 75:7 toe 64:14 together 23:14, 97:14, 105:7, 120:22, 162:20 told 91:20, 91:22, 117:18, 139:15, 152:8, 164:12, 175:7 tomorrow 90:11</p>	<p>too 62:17, 63:7, 67:2, 85:20, 107:18, 121:3, 167:5, 167:15, 176:19, 177:9, 178:2 took 59:17, 62:23, 67:11, 90:19, 98:3, 116:1, 119:12, 120:12, 130:24, 137:1, 139:20 tools 163:5, 163:21 tooth 181:21 top 10:10, 15:6 torch 24:3 toshar 142:7 total 63:21, 159:8 totally 110:23 touch 86:23 tough 63:6 toward 32:4 towards 102:3 town 84:5, 84:8, 109:17 township 17:21, 110:9, 110:10, 114:24, 174:24 township's 122:23 tpa 49:9, 49:16 track 115:13</p>	<p>tracks 50:8 trade 108:23 traffic 49:20, 49:22, 49:23, 49:24 tragic 164:22 train 50:8 training 41:1, 135:11 trains 50:10 transaction 30:10, 30:15, 30:18, 68:12, 68:13, 68:18 transactions 122:12 transcribed 1:24, 79:12, 184:6 transcriber 184:1, 184:16 transcript 184:4 transfer 28:5, 60:15 transferred 124:20 transformed 132:4 transition 77:16, 78:13, 108:4 translate 101:13 translator: 101:12 transparent 155:19, 155:20 transplant 8:18, 13:14 transport 23:8 transportation 23:4, 55:24,</p>	<p>60:11, 74:22, 74:24 transported 38:16 transports 58:22 trauma 11:12, 15:23, 77:22, 77:24, 107:9, 166:16 traumatic 59:14, 60:6 travel 138:19, 142:18, 167:24 traveled 138:17 treat 45:10, 84:19, 156:16, 168:24 treated 26:24, 127:6, 153:14 treating 84:14, 123:23 treatment 20:12, 21:11, 45:18, 45:21, 48:21, 49:5, 53:19, 60:4, 74:7, 123:24, 168:20 treatments 22:5, 45:16, 45:17 treats 56:20 trend 32:3, 72:8 trends 9:17, 14:13, 71:24, 72:1, 72:16, 72:24 triage 46:20, 46:21 trip 114:13 triton 79:16, 79:18,</p>
---	--	---	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

79:23, 79:24, 80:7, 80:10, 80:11, 80:13, 80:16, 80:20, 80:23, 81:3, 85:15, 85:20, 86:2, 88:13, 88:15, 88:20, 89:7, 89:9, 113:4 triton's 113:5 true 39:4, 44:7, 46:18, 54:14, 61:5, 67:21, 108:16, 112:13, 140:6, 140:10, 152:22, 154:1, 168:16, 184:4 truly 15:18, 83:19, 165:21, 166:6, 166:9, 168:17 trust 84:17, 85:8, 151:24, 152:3, 181:20 trusted 127:14 trustees 66:18 truth 21:14, 66:5, 118:10, 155:20 truthful 29:17 try 13:1, 19:20, 94:6, 104:10 trying 12:12, 25:12, 41:22, 42:12, 67:13, 87:21, 112:18, 137:5, 179:18 tty 5:3, 5:11	tube 51:1 tubes 170:12 turn 65:10, 81:22, 85:21, 86:7 turned 61:18, 164:14 turning 115:24 turns 82:24 twice 116:20, 179:9 two 4:16, 9:14, 11:24, 14:10, 19:6, 27:19, 31:2, 32:17, 35:7, 41:22, 59:2, 62:11, 63:23, 68:11, 69:11, 69:13, 69:14, 70:1, 75:20, 77:22, 82:21, 90:2, 90:22, 91:22, 93:17, 98:16, 99:2, 111:11, 126:18, 127:4, 128:17, 129:6, 130:11, 137:21, 139:5, 146:11, 147:18, 154:2, 158:7, 159:19, 179:6, 181:1, 181:4 two-year 33:22 twofold 59:1 type 142:23, 167:24 typed 4:18 types 77:6	typical 25:22 <hr/> U <hr/> u-d-o-n-i 123:12 ubiquitous 43:21 udoni 123:11, 123:12, 123:17, 123:20 uic 136:2 ultimate 149:12 ultimately 124:13 ultrasound 89:11, 89:14 uncompensated 9:18, 14:14 under 31:8, 33:18, 33:23, 34:19, 35:7, 46:17, 68:1, 68:12, 68:18, 70:3, 70:12, 95:8, 103:18, 122:7, 128:24, 129:2, 138:18 underbedding 45:11, 45:12 undercompensated 9:17, 14:14 underdog 39:8 underdogs 36:20 underemphasize 62:22 underinsured 107:24, 140:5 underrepresented 107:1 underscored 68:2 underserved 23:18, 30:13,	42:10, 42:12, 44:8, 68:16, 107:1, 173:19, 174:24 understand 16:9, 74:21, 78:10, 117:22, 117:23, 142:12, 143:8, 144:8, 148:20, 149:16, 152:11 understanding 8:15, 13:10, 93:14 understands 33:8, 39:1, 122:4 underutilized 128:23, 129:3 undisputedly 33:22 undocumented 107:20 unemployed 168:14 unemployment 141:4, 161:15 unethical 179:5 unfortunately 25:7, 26:12, 161:6 unidentified 12:22, 12:24, 18:18, 18:20, 24:12, 24:14, 25:2, 28:3, 33:10, 34:12, 40:8, 40:15, 40:18, 43:1, 43:4, 43:11, 44:7, 46:18, 50:22, 52:10, 54:14, 55:21, 57:16, 57:17, 57:22, 60:2, 61:5, 65:6, 67:10, 67:21,
---	--	---	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>70:23, 70:24, 71:1, 71:3, 71:15, 71:20, 75:14, 75:16, 75:18, 75:19, 75:22, 76:2, 84:12, 86:6, 86:10, 86:13, 86:17, 87:2, 88:8, 101:10, 106:2, 108:16, 109:24, 110:8, 113:16, 113:20, 113:23, 114:20, 114:21, 115:10, 115:14, 115:15, 116:9, 121:9, 123:15, 123:19, 131:23, 141:20, 145:20, 145:23, 160:4, 160:7, 160:12, 180:6, 180:11 uninsured 9:19, 14:15, 81:22, 84:21 union 127:22 unique 55:23, 173:11 unit 20:21, 22:2, 22:16, 22:21, 37:15, 37:18, 47:9, 60:14, 112:15, 179:20, 179:21 unite 145:14, 151:8 united 55:5 units 20:9, 45:10, 57:1 universally 104:2 university 42:17, 167:11</p>	<p>unknown 8:2, 8:7, 8:13, 10:16, 10:17, 10:19, 10:20, 11:7, 11:13, 11:17, 11:19, 11:21, 11:24, 12:3, 12:6, 18:11 unprofitable 130:9 unquote 49:20 unselfishly 175:8 until 6:14, 26:12, 35:18, 35:23, 37:13, 71:9, 84:3, 90:6, 133:12, 137:6, 172:5 upcoming 134:24 upfront 122:6 uphold 122:19 uplifted 23:15 upon 5:7, 19:16, 73:20, 74:4 upper 112:7 upset 48:13, 115:24, 157:6 usa 133:2 use 88:12, 163:10, 167:11 used 10:13, 15:9, 45:3, 65:7, 133:19, 152:7, 162:6, 163:10,</p>	<p>175:24, 176:3, 180:2 usually 115:19 utilization 128:13 utilize 128:9, 129:14 utilized 128:3</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">v</p> <hr/> <p>v-a-l-e-n-t-i-n-o 114:22 valentino 114:19, 114:22, 115:11, 115:16, 116:10 valid 6:1, 21:12 valteirrez 147:10 valtierrez 147:9 valuable 28:6 value 132:11 value-based 76:16 valued 78:19 vanguard 67:6 vantage 118:4 vara 100:7, 100:9, 100:10 variety 74:1, 125:8 various 7:21, 8:1, 8:6, 17:1, 40:12, 40:17, 58:1, 66:8, 69:20, 75:13, 79:3, 79:6, 95:13,</p>	<p>100:8, 109:8, 112:1, 154:11, 163:16 velazquez 174:7, 174:8 venues 44:12 vera 175:21 verbal 4:13 very 17:15, 25:24, 26:8, 26:11, 39:4, 59:20, 60:6, 63:2, 63:6, 81:8, 85:16, 85:23, 89:4, 97:16, 98:2, 98:21, 99:4, 100:18, 101:20, 103:15, 117:23, 118:22, 122:3, 125:9, 125:12, 133:3, 134:1, 134:3, 135:1, 137:4, 138:13, 145:8, 151:10, 154:20, 154:23, 157:6, 157:9, 159:17, 161:6, 164:13, 176:13, 181:11 vetted 53:23 vice 127:20 vicinity 166:13, 166:14 victim 145:1, 162:22 victims 145:10, 168:12, 173:5 victor 174:9 view 24:6, 47:11,</p>
--	--	--	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>85:18, 178:4 village 28:17, 28:19, 30:6, 35:14, 36:2, 43:15, 58:8, 58:13, 58:17, 58:22, 59:3, 62:4, 64:15, 65:18, 65:22, 111:19, 144:6, 144:12, 164:2, 164:7, 166:19 villages 98:7, 99:18 villegas 144:20 vines 17:5, 17:6 violated 33:22 violates 33:20 violence 145:2, 145:11, 162:16, 162:23, 163:8, 163:22, 172:17, 173:5 vise 63:7 vision 122:23 visit 98:24, 146:9 visited 63:13, 100:24 visits 8:23, 9:14, 13:19, 14:9, 23:1, 62:13, 96:9 vital 29:18, 29:20, 33:1, 48:3, 79:21, 138:7 voice 88:12, 112:2, 119:13</p>	<p>voices 99:24, 106:16, 108:21 volume 106:18 volunteer 106:8, 174:11 vote 18:7 voted 118:11, 118:12 vow 144:13 vulnerable 29:8, 33:3, 55:16</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">W</p> <hr/> <p>w-a-r-d 47:20, 169:10 w-e-l-c-h 66:10 w-i-l-l-i-a-m 71:13 w-i-l-l-i-s 91:14 wait 133:21, 161:16, 164:12, 171:3, 172:6 waiting 23:8, 115:3, 146:20, 148:24 walk 37:10, 37:22, 37:23, 50:24, 59:21, 91:16, 133:7, 133:9, 133:15, 133:23, 134:2, 141:10, 146:22, 163:19 walked 60:4 walking 23:1, 39:19, 83:20, 98:9, 133:10 want 7:5, 7:10,</p>	<p>7:14, 17:10, 19:10, 21:12, 26:14, 27:4, 27:8, 28:18, 29:24, 36:1, 39:3, 39:21, 41:3, 42:1, 42:2, 42:19, 42:21, 48:5, 48:11, 51:9, 52:12, 59:4, 61:2, 61:14, 61:16, 62:8, 62:24, 65:8, 65:23, 79:8, 88:21, 93:15, 93:21, 94:14, 110:23, 111:6, 111:7, 111:15, 114:12, 118:1, 119:24, 122:18, 125:12, 134:17, 134:18, 136:1, 136:3, 136:15, 137:16, 137:17, 138:3, 138:4, 138:12, 138:21, 147:4, 147:16, 150:7, 150:8, 150:24, 156:7, 158:24, 161:13, 161:14, 161:15, 161:16, 161:17, 162:4, 162:11, 162:12, 169:4, 170:9, 174:2 wanted 66:3, 90:9, 139:18, 153:11, 154:14, 161:5, 161:12, 161:20, 161:21 wants 41:2, 57:11, 177:23 war 89:24 ward 47:17, 47:20,</p>	<p>47:22, 50:23, 62:9, 62:20, 63:9, 169:9 warmth 19:3 washington 90:1 wasn't 26:23, 126:6, 152:18, 152:20, 152:21, 155:6, 177:19 waste 51:11 wasted 51:2 watch 116:5 way 10:24, 13:17, 15:14, 27:16, 33:7, 37:16, 38:22, 42:22, 48:6, 52:18, 69:6, 70:24, 71:9, 74:9, 75:10, 93:3, 97:11, 118:2, 134:4, 142:18, 150:5, 155:22, 156:7, 156:10, 156:17, 176:5, 176:16, 176:18, 177:14, 181:9 ways 73:2, 77:9, 86:12 we'll 12:12, 16:18, 114:18, 156:14, 172:8, 176:23 we're 3:4, 6:14, 12:11, 12:12, 16:11, 16:12, 36:5, 36:8, 41:17, 41:18, 43:6, 63:16,</p>
---	--	---	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>64:20, 64:22, 67:23, 69:22, 70:12, 87:11, 87:14, 88:2, 88:18, 92:4, 93:3, 94:9, 94:10, 94:13, 95:2, 95:3, 110:13, 113:8, 117:10, 126:23, 127:22, 132:12, 133:5, 133:19, 133:20, 135:3, 137:4, 137:5, 142:11, 142:21, 145:18, 154:23, 157:2, 163:5, 172:4, 172:13, 178:20, 178:22, 180:13, 180:16, 181:13, 181:21</p> <p>we've 87:8, 170:10</p> <p>weakest 56:21</p> <p>wealth 74:8</p> <p>wealthy 105:18</p> <p>wear 51:7, 91:6, 175:24, 176:3</p> <p>wears 176:1</p> <p>web 127:13</p> <p>website 182:9</p> <p>week 28:19, 82:21, 124:1, 169:15, 171:3, 179:9, 179:10</p> <p>weekly 174:1</p> <p>weeks 19:6, 19:8, 31:12, 31:19,</p>	<p>41:22, 63:4, 69:11, 69:13, 69:14, 90:2, 91:22, 98:16, 111:11, 155:3, 158:4, 162:6, 162:10, 177:7, 179:6</p> <p>weiss 27:14, 67:18, 78:16, 84:6, 93:13</p> <p>welch 18:24, 36:22, 66:7, 66:9, 66:10, 67:11, 67:22, 69:21, 71:2, 71:4, 92:4, 109:12, 117:16, 118:12, 151:5</p> <p>welch's 108:14</p> <p>welcome 12:22, 102:4</p> <p>welcomed 107:23</p> <p>welcomes 56:2</p> <p>well 8:20, 13:6, 17:24, 19:9, 22:4, 27:15, 28:19, 46:20, 61:2, 73:10, 73:17, 75:1, 76:14, 77:13, 79:1, 104:10, 107:19, 110:3, 110:12, 110:18, 110:19, 111:11, 111:12, 117:13, 118:1, 118:5, 118:9, 126:6, 142:11, 143:22, 143:23, 146:11, 148:12, 149:16, 153:16, 154:9,</p>	<p>157:10, 164:14, 166:4, 169:11, 170:3, 172:4</p> <p>well-being 97:12, 168:10</p> <p>well-documented 103:20</p> <p>wellness 16:2, 42:14, 74:14, 77:10, 77:14</p> <p>went 18:18, 18:19, 25:2, 25:3, 90:3, 90:8, 90:20, 100:15, 125:14, 126:8, 135:7, 156:9, 162:9, 176:4, 176:5</p> <p>were 7:9, 16:10, 29:2, 31:4, 32:18, 32:19, 32:20, 51:2, 63:3, 64:8, 64:23, 64:24, 65:1, 68:22, 69:4, 69:7, 84:2, 84:4, 91:20, 91:21, 92:22, 98:18, 101:21, 110:22, 112:10, 112:18, 117:6, 125:18, 126:10, 126:13, 126:15, 127:2, 127:8, 133:11, 135:21, 137:19, 139:5, 140:4, 147:19, 154:11, 154:12, 161:3, 161:4, 164:20, 169:1, 169:24, 177:3, 177:14, 177:15, 177:21, 179:5, 179:7, 181:4, 184:6</p>	<p>weren't 61:14, 112:17</p> <p>west 2:7, 7:23, 13:7, 16:14, 16:20, 16:21, 27:14, 42:18, 42:19, 47:3, 49:18, 53:12, 54:23, 57:12, 67:17, 71:22, 73:3, 73:7, 73:12, 73:19, 73:24, 74:5, 75:1, 75:20, 76:9, 77:12, 77:14, 77:20, 78:15, 84:6, 85:10, 93:12, 101:10, 102:18, 103:3, 103:14, 103:20, 106:9, 110:14, 110:15, 110:20, 112:6, 112:15, 114:12, 114:13, 116:7, 121:15, 128:12, 128:14, 128:16, 134:19, 135:3, 135:6, 164:18, 165:16, 165:19, 172:21, 179:1, 180:2, 182:19</p> <p>westchester 44:15, 51:22, 110:5</p> <p>western 16:19, 45:12, 72:18, 104:4, 105:17, 106:19, 114:24, 172:22</p> <p>westlake's 9:16, 14:11, 30:13, 68:17, 80:15, 80:23, 89:13, 112:21, 119:5, 139:16</p> <p>what 13:11, 13:16,</p>
---	--	--	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>16:11, 26:6, 27:3, 29:18, 31:5, 31:7, 33:18, 37:4, 38:13, 38:15, 38:17, 38:18, 39:22, 42:8, 42:15, 43:4, 45:1, 48:11, 57:14, 62:20, 62:21, 62:24, 63:24, 64:1, 64:5, 64:8, 69:7, 86:7, 86:13, 87:24, 92:1, 92:13, 92:17, 93:14, 93:21, 93:22, 98:21, 107:14, 110:16, 111:8, 111:9, 113:18, 114:1, 115:22, 116:22, 117:2, 117:24, 118:2, 118:9, 118:21, 124:23, 126:12, 126:14, 127:8, 128:16, 129:3, 129:14, 131:21, 135:8, 140:19, 143:5, 144:2, 147:15, 149:4, 149:16, 151:19, 151:22, 152:22, 152:23, 154:7, 154:9, 154:22, 155:23, 157:13, 160:7, 166:23, 176:4 what's 19:13, 63:20, 64:13, 79:12, 87:9, 97:21, 121:5, 136:9, 143:2, 154:7, 175:8 whatever 158:20</p>	<p>wheelchairs 39:18 when 19:19, 27:9, 30:2, 33:12, 35:17, 38:15, 39:5, 41:16, 45:20, 46:20, 48:18, 49:24, 51:24, 58:12, 59:13, 62:21, 64:18, 68:4, 76:24, 79:13, 82:18, 83:22, 86:8, 89:23, 90:18, 91:23, 98:7, 100:15, 100:17, 102:6, 105:3, 107:12, 112:8, 113:7, 115:8, 115:12, 117:24, 120:12, 124:24, 125:13, 129:16, 133:8, 134:6, 134:20, 135:21, 137:19, 139:5, 139:15, 139:17, 140:24, 141:15, 142:22, 143:13, 143:15, 146:18, 146:19, 159:7, 162:6, 162:15, 164:9, 164:22, 166:3, 166:5, 166:8, 168:2, 168:7, 169:12, 170:20, 176:3, 176:12, 176:14, 178:3, 181:3 whenever 59:18 where 10:13, 11:5, 15:19, 16:21, 19:19, 35:3, 38:14, 42:15, 46:24, 50:4,</p>	<p>63:23, 76:21, 77:3, 78:11, 78:12, 91:15, 93:23, 96:14, 102:23, 108:12, 112:16, 127:16, 136:21, 141:7, 141:13, 141:14, 141:15, 141:19, 142:12, 142:15, 144:8, 146:14, 155:1, 163:20, 164:24, 165:5, 165:19, 166:24, 167:2, 169:16, 177:15 wherever 83:10, 150:13, 150:17 whether 36:23, 36:24, 37:1, 141:1 which 6:8, 20:18, 22:19, 22:21, 23:11, 25:7, 27:13, 27:15, 34:8, 34:15, 35:6, 37:16, 45:8, 45:11, 45:21, 47:6, 47:8, 51:3, 54:16, 59:8, 59:13, 72:2, 73:16, 73:20, 74:23, 75:2, 77:10, 77:20, 77:23, 80:18, 81:17, 82:3, 82:7, 82:16, 84:10, 97:8, 100:3, 111:5, 114:14, 114:23, 115:19, 125:16, 127:23, 128:7, 128:9, 129:24, 130:13, 130:22, 169:23, 175:14,</p>	<p>179:21 while 32:24, 73:14, 79:8, 80:14, 87:3, 115:21, 129:12, 151:18, 169:24 whitaker 63:2, 64:11, 68:22, 70:15, 70:23, 71:1 white 55:11, 144:7 who 8:18, 20:22, 22:10, 22:17, 22:24, 23:4, 23:19, 26:14, 34:20, 36:6, 36:18, 36:20, 36:23, 37:9, 37:19, 39:17, 39:18, 39:23, 44:5, 44:11, 47:13, 51:16, 53:21, 56:19, 59:23, 63:5, 63:6, 64:4, 66:20, 70:15, 70:20, 78:22, 78:24, 83:12, 90:17, 95:23, 96:8, 98:1, 98:9, 99:10, 102:9, 104:19, 106:15, 107:8, 107:14, 109:4, 109:16, 111:16, 112:20, 113:2, 115:1, 117:9, 117:19, 118:14, 119:14, 121:3, 122:14, 122:17, 122:22, 123:24, 124:17, 125:7, 126:2, 126:4, 126:18, 132:8, 135:19, 136:5,</p>
---	---	---	--

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>136:19, 136:23, 137:1, 139:12, 139:14, 140:2, 142:14, 142:19, 142:21, 149:24, 153:3, 155:15, 157:17, 159:23, 162:14, 165:5, 165:13, 165:16, 168:6, 168:12, 168:22, 169:7, 169:8, 172:4, 174:6, 174:16, 175:19, 178:20, 180:3, 180:10, 181:3, 182:2</p> <p>whole 9:21, 14:18, 57:2, 84:19, 103:24, 122:1, 122:2, 144:8, 148:15, 153:15, 156:10, 180:9</p> <p>whose 46:6, 60:22, 96:3, 165:11, 169:6</p> <p>why 31:16, 41:4, 42:3, 51:23, 56:7, 69:16, 74:23, 78:4, 92:24, 110:15, 119:12, 125:10, 148:24, 149:2, 149:11, 152:6, 152:10, 154:4, 154:5, 159:6, 159:10, 162:11, 173:13, 173:15</p> <p>wide 46:5, 74:1, 177:20</p> <p>wife 19:4, 59:23, 126:2, 148:1, 148:2</p> <p>william 71:13</p>	<p>williams 55:12</p> <p>willing 90:19, 114:7</p> <p>willis 18:24, 36:21, 91:12, 91:13, 109:13, 118:11, 130:12, 132:15, 151:4</p> <p>willis's 117:15</p> <p>windows 51:5</p> <p>wing 164:18, 165:16</p> <p>winter 85:6</p> <p>wisely 151:2</p> <p>wish 66:10, 120:24</p> <p>wishes 169:8, 172:4, 172:7, 175:19, 178:20, 182:2</p> <p>within 21:10, 23:1, 47:7, 49:10, 70:2, 83:20, 84:17, 92:5, 106:18, 112:17, 142:17, 158:3</p> <p>without 20:9, 22:9, 57:5, 57:7, 60:5, 62:14, 64:5, 83:24, 99:16, 104:15, 104:16, 108:18, 118:16, 127:5, 140:3, 141:6, 167:6</p> <p>witness 57:20, 76:13, 81:10, 85:13, 95:12, 95:14, 105:21, 110:10,</p>	<p>113:18, 113:22, 114:1, 114:19, 134:14, 141:21, 163:8</p> <p>witnessed 67:7</p> <p>woke 135:16</p> <p>woman 93:16, 145:4</p> <p>women 22:17, 52:16, 55:4, 57:12, 96:5, 162:20, 162:24, 163:15, 163:19, 173:4, 173:10, 173:22, 173:23, 173:24</p> <p>won 114:2</p> <p>won't 58:14, 119:13, 120:22</p> <p>wonder 128:16</p> <p>wonderful 95:1, 140:8, 171:6</p> <p>wondering 151:19</p> <p>word 10:21, 11:17, 62:15, 152:2, 152:3, 152:11, 153:5</p> <p>words 108:14, 137:16, 151:21</p> <p>work 11:4, 15:18, 36:23, 39:3, 41:2, 41:3, 42:1, 42:5, 42:6, 44:18, 46:9, 60:22, 60:23, 78:4, 78:12, 79:4, 79:23, 80:24,</p>	<p>86:15, 87:17, 91:3, 91:17, 93:1, 93:9, 94:13, 94:17, 97:14, 101:3, 101:4, 104:14, 104:18, 105:1, 108:19, 111:2, 112:4, 112:8, 114:6, 114:9, 114:12, 115:5, 118:2, 122:19, 126:10, 127:2, 140:16, 156:24, 160:18, 161:13, 161:14, 161:17, 164:7, 165:6, 171:6</p> <p>worked 61:8, 90:2, 119:19, 122:14, 135:19, 160:19, 161:7, 161:10, 166:18, 175:3, 179:2, 181:10</p> <p>worker 179:2</p> <p>workers 127:23, 128:1</p> <p>working 16:23, 24:13, 36:16, 38:24, 41:19, 42:3, 47:17, 52:10, 83:4, 89:16, 94:7, 112:11, 161:3</p> <p>works 26:8, 95:22, 102:20, 149:24</p> <p>workshop 98:12, 98:14</p> <p>world 8:16, 89:24, 118:21</p> <p>world-class 127:15</p> <p>worried 87:10</p>
--	---	---	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>worry 95:14 worse 10:11, 15:7 worst 118:22 worth 116:23, 116:24, 152:14 worthwhile 80:15 would 17:22, 18:5, 27:18, 29:15, 30:6, 31:15, 34:1, 35:6, 49:1, 60:5, 60:8, 60:9, 60:18, 60:19, 65:11, 68:7, 68:10, 89:17, 90:7, 90:11, 96:14, 96:15, 97:8, 98:20, 101:3, 108:6, 111:19, 112:20, 116:19, 117:19, 119:1, 119:24, 125:21, 127:4, 130:13, 131:17, 134:21, 136:11, 140:6, 146:9, 147:1, 151:20, 151:21, 153:2, 156:23, 158:5, 158:6, 164:12, 167:7, 167:10, 167:23, 168:1, 168:9, 168:11, 168:13, 170:5, 171:17, 173:15, 177:20, 180:23 wouldn't 63:1, 153:21, 169:21, 177:8 wound 63:8 woven 106:19</p>	<p>wow 117:10 wrapped 60:3 write 125:10 writing 78:22 written 3:21, 4:13, 5:23, 6:2, 6:8, 6:23, 114:17, 182:15 wrong 62:16, 139:17, 159:16 wrote 116:20 www 182:9, 182:14</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Y</p> <hr/> <p>y-u-n-e-z 40:20 yay 114:20, 114:21 yeah 93:18, 113:16, 120:21, 177:24, 178:17 year 9:13, 10:6, 14:9, 15:3, 33:4, 55:5, 62:6, 62:12, 67:16, 80:1, 99:3, 106:7, 124:2, 130:20, 141:17, 158:15, 158:16 year-old 17:8, 119:1 year-olds 113:9, 113:10, 113:11 yearly 58:24 yes 8:6, 24:14,</p>	<p>28:3, 40:12, 50:22, 52:20, 57:22, 58:5, 69:20, 109:8, 115:9, 115:10, 115:14, 115:15, 115:17, 121:9, 132:24, 164:19 yesterday 97:20 yet 7:1, 19:18, 54:6, 56:12, 84:7, 87:21, 110:2, 140:18, 152:9, 161:23 you'll 16:8 you're 6:16, 10:21, 12:22, 43:1, 50:17, 51:8, 95:6, 109:23, 111:13, 116:9, 120:18, 120:19, 121:2, 146:20, 146:22, 160:8 you've 62:18 you-all 66:11 young 88:23, 104:12, 113:9, 155:15 younger 163:13, 176:3 youngest 146:12, 147:19 your 3:5, 6:7, 6:12, 6:19, 6:20, 6:21, 6:23, 7:5, 7:14, 18:12, 18:18, 24:9, 24:16, 28:13, 36:11, 40:6, 40:15, 40:18, 41:7, 43:8,</p>	<p>43:9, 49:10, 50:13, 50:14, 51:2, 51:6, 51:9, 52:7, 58:3, 62:17, 75:12, 79:5, 86:3, 86:8, 88:19, 89:16, 93:8, 93:13, 95:6, 95:7, 99:23, 111:14, 114:15, 116:5, 118:22, 118:23, 118:24, 122:8, 123:16, 127:1, 127:2, 132:23, 134:8, 143:17, 149:12, 150:3, 150:15, 152:2, 153:17, 168:8, 178:6, 178:10, 178:15, 180:18, 182:24 yourself 152:22 yourselves 150:2 yunez 40:10, 40:13, 40:16, 40:19, 40:20, 90:16</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Z</p> <hr/> <p>zen 163:9</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">\$</p> <hr/> <p>\$14 10:9, 32:10 \$28 10:14 \$4 10:6, 15:3, 131:16, 131:17, 131:18 \$500,000 74:13 \$70 27:10, 27:12,</p>
---	---	--	---

Transcript of Public Hearing
 Conducted on March 11, 2019

64:4	13	1971	2018
0	73:22, 81:9,	66:22	10:3, 10:8,
00	183:2	1977	14:24, 15:4,
4:23, 4:24,	14	36:17	30:3, 32:10
6:14	15:5, 36:10,	1982	2019
004	100:12, 160:19	181:9	1:12, 4:21,
1:7, 3:7	14.1	1983	5:13, 31:11,
0154	33:19	181:1	32:15, 49:19,
129:23	15	1989	182:5, 182:14,
0466	6:16, 24:23,	61:9	184:17
5:3, 5:11	49:21, 63:13,	1990	21
099	65:12, 89:23,	61:9	31:22, 37:13,
129:23	90:17, 92:21,	1996	95:11, 184:17
1	112:5, 113:9,	5:21	212
	142:18, 145:19,	1st	90:1
	180:14	62:3	217
	16	2	2:9, 5:2, 5:11
4:23	22:21, 85:12,		22
1-2	112:16, 119:20,		51:19, 62:3,
121:18	135:16, 173:6,	4:18, 4:24,	97:3, 117:14,
10	182:14	34:6	172:22
6:16	1601	2.2	23
10,000	1:14, 4:21	77:20	100:6, 123:22
129:1, 137:22	17	20	230
100	59:22, 59:24,	27:11, 32:3,	4:5
33:11	86:5, 101:16,	33:18, 49:20,	234196
105	121:11, 124:21,	49:22, 62:5,	1:22
110:21, 125:14	133:7	63:13, 91:11,	24
11	18	113:9, 148:10,	37:16, 37:17,
1:12, 4:19,	47:24, 49:19,	180:14	37:18, 54:17,
4:21, 20:21,	82:18, 88:7,	20,000	54:20, 54:22,
57:23	125:13, 162:22	116:21, 122:12,	55:2, 101:9,
1130	184	122:17	112:17, 116:4
3:24	1:23	200	25
1130.250	1864	103:18	24:24, 90:14,
34:7, 34:14,	164:3	2001	102:13, 113:9,
34:19	19	182:7	153:10, 153:19
1130.560	1:7, 3:7,	2002	25,000
35:16	89:20, 179:2	147:20	51:19
12	1911	2010	26
73:22, 79:7,	109:17	66:16, 147:21	58:19, 105:24,
82:14, 82:22,	1914	2013	106:1
106:7, 181:22	110:21	66:13	27
1200	1927	2015	43:3
62:13, 62:19	110:22, 165:14	10:11, 15:7,	28
1225	1957	31:8, 32:7,	40:7, 53:6
4:6	120:11	129:22	29
123	1961	2016	31:11, 31:21,
94:10	164:8, 164:17	49:7, 103:12	

Transcript of Public Hearing
Conducted on March 11, 2019

<p>32:15, 43:17, 47:16, 53:3, 80:1, 124:19</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <hr/> <p>3.5 130:23</p> <p>30 39:24, 40:16, 40:22, 49:14, 49:15, 50:17, 80:2, 109:3, 113:10, 114:13, 116:4, 133:10, 135:19, 135:21, 135:22, 147:12, 147:23, 148:3, 169:24, 182:5</p> <p>300 80:4</p> <p>303 133:22</p> <p>31 17:8, 17:11, 25:8, 111:21, 111:22</p> <p>32 111:23, 171:2</p> <p>33 60:11, 114:17, 114:18, 162:10</p> <p>34 119:16</p> <p>35 27:13, 37:12, 76:10, 90:10, 120:17, 136:7, 157:22, 172:22</p> <p>3516 2:9, 5:3, 5:11</p> <p>36 40:9, 86:10, 106:3, 120:9, 120:17, 120:18, 121:1</p> <p>363 124:1</p> <p>37 86:10, 106:3,</p>	<p>120:19, 121:2, 121:4</p> <p>38 120:23, 120:24, 121:13</p> <p>39 52:6</p> <p>3960 33:19</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <hr/> <p>4,100 9:13, 14:9</p> <p>4,800 9:14, 14:10</p> <p>40 36:17, 37:12, 39:24, 50:18, 81:14, 113:10, 123:9, 123:10, 125:20, 181:20</p> <p>41 123:10</p> <p>42 25:10, 25:23, 123:10</p> <p>43 125:4</p> <p>44 127:18</p> <p>45 24:21, 24:22, 50:2, 114:17</p> <p>46 132:19</p> <p>47 172:14</p> <p>47.68 129:13</p> <p>473 9:23, 14:20</p> <p>48 17:13, 134:12</p> <p>49 134:13</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <hr/> <p>50 51:17, 51:20,</p>	<p>58:14, 65:5, 82:16, 113:11, 119:19, 137:8</p> <p>51 138:23</p> <p>52 142:4</p> <p>525 2:7, 182:19</p> <p>53 144:18, 146:2</p> <p>54 144:19, 146:2</p> <p>547 5:3, 5:11</p> <p>55 146:3</p> <p>56 147:8</p> <p>57 139:3, 151:12</p> <p>58 153:7</p> <p>59 156:19</p> <p>5th 164:8</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">6</p> <hr/> <p>6,500 51:20</p> <p>60 55:8, 135:20, 157:19</p> <p>600 58:23, 62:12, 62:13, 137:18</p> <p>60160 1:15, 4:22</p> <p>61 160:15, 160:16</p> <p>62 160:16, 169:19</p> <p>62761 2:8, 182:20</p> <p>63 162:1</p> <p>64 121:7, 163:23</p>	<p>648 87:5</p> <p>65 82:18, 169:5</p> <p>66 141:10</p> <p>67 62:5, 62:6</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">7</p> <hr/> <p>70 27:22, 103:4, 103:5, 103:8, 180:17</p> <p>700 17:20, 21:20, 23:23, 55:4</p> <p>74 109:18</p> <p>77 3:23, 151:4</p> <p>782 2:9, 5:3, 5:11</p> <p>7th 35:15, 66:13, 91:14</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">8</p> <hr/> <p>8 4:24, 6:14, 183:2</p> <p>8.5 33:23, 35:8</p> <p>80 25:17</p> <p>800 5:3, 5:11, 60:17, 181:14</p> <p>82 119:1</p> <p>85 123:24</p> <p>88 91:7</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">9</p> <hr/> <p>9-1-1 44:13, 126:22,</p>
--	---	--	--

166:21
90
54:5, 128:8,
165:17
90,000
127:22
900
55:4