

September 2, 2020

Courtney Avery
Administrator
Illinois Health Facilities & Review Board
525 W. Jefferson Street, 2nd Floor
Springfield, IL 62761
courtney.avery@illinois.gov

Re: Opposition to CON Application #20-17 – Metro East Endoscopic Surgery Center (MESC)

Dear Ms. Avery:

I respectfully ask that the Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board (IHFSRB) deny CON Application #20-17. As described therein, Project #20-17 relies *entirely* on shifting outpatient orthopedic surgeries away from my rural hospital, HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital - Breese. As a leading healthcare provider and top employer in southcentral Illinois, I firmly believe approval of the MESC CON will further deplete already anemic volumes due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important for the IHFSRB to realize that advancement of this project will most likely result in further job loss for healthcare professionals, adding additional insult to an already injured economy. Clearly this is unnecessary duplication of services at the most inopportune time.

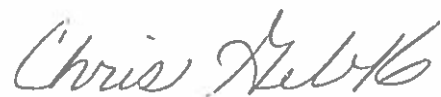
St. Joseph's Hospital - Breese currently has the privilege of hosting four orthopedic surgeons within our on-site specialty clinic, with a fifth surgeon joining our hospital in December of 2020. Ironically, Dr. Felix Ungacta, one of our current orthopedic surgeons, is supporting this CON having committed an average of two hundred and twenty orthopedic surgical procedures which he will pull from my hospital in Breese and HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital located in Highland, Illinois. Dr. Ungacta's support is extremely disheartening as we have regionally invested in the Mako Robot and infrastructure support, providing him the opportunity to become the premier regional destination for orthopedic care. Within our current-state, operating room utilization at St. Joseph's Hospital – Breese is currently at 35%, which clearly defines our growth capacity to be 65%.

In summary, this CON expansion of orthopedic surgery services is another demonstration of severe misuse of resources. If approved, this project will not only add to the overall orthopedic saturation rate within our primary service area but result in the potential for further job loss and continue to drive up the cost of healthcare based on pure redundancy.

As a community and healthcare leader, I ask that the IHFSRB look at CON Application #20-17 through the lens of simplicity, dismissing the request purely because the service expansion is not supported by consumer need.

In addition, I have seen several coworkers lose their jobs due to COVID and we cannot lose anymore!!

Please help us!
Respectfully,



Chris Gebke
Director of Volunteer Services