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Teutopolis, Illinois 62467  
31 August 2020

Board of Directors  
Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board  
c/o Mr. Mike Constantino, Senior Reviewer  
525 West Jefferson Street (2nd Floor)  
Springfield, IL 62761

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HEALTH FACILITIES &  
SERVICES REVIEW BOARD

Dear Board Members,

I am writing in support of the Sarah Bush Lincoln expansion project in Effingham, Illinois, and I request that my comments become part of the public hearing process. I offer this support because of the value it brings to the Effingham community, but also because of certain problems with operations at St. Anthony's Memorial Hospital.

My name is Linda Ruholl. I am 74 years old, and I have lived in Effingham County my entire life except for college. I have been married for 52 years. Artie and I have one daughter who is a case manager at the Teutopolis Community Support Systems. Her husband is employed at IDOT. Both of them were born at SAMH. We have 3 grandchildren and 1 great-grandchild. We are members of St. Francis Parish in Teutopolis.

Prior to retirement, I was a tenured faculty member at Mattoon's Lake Land College. My educational background includes a PhD in education, a Masters in Nursing from U of I-Chicago and a BSN from SIU-E. I supervised students at both Sarah Bush and St. Anthony's, but the bulk of my work was at St. Anthony's. It was a great place for clinical; the floor staff was supportive and the patients welcomed the care my ADN students provided. Later on, however, some things changed at the Effingham hospital that cause me to harbor grave concerns about the safety of its patients.

I retired in 2008. My husband had a surgery in 2012 that required an overnight, and I stayed with him. The nurses were competent and kind, but I was distressed by the lack of hand washing. No one went near the sink close to his bed. I gently questioned a night nurse - I was told they used alcohol-based cleaner. I was so struck by this response that I commented on the diminishing impact of a 19th century infection control lesson when I authored a Civil War nursing history book in 2013.<sup>1</sup>

After my retirement, I did adjunct work in the BSN-Completion Program at EIU. For a time, I taught NUR4506 Community Health. Public health is part of that course, so I started paying more attention to IDPH publications and Leapfrog Safety Scores. The Leapfrog Group rated Sarah Bush with an A for patient safety in Spring 2020. St. Anthony's grade was a B. That B was an improvement from Spring 2016, which Leapfrog gave St. Anthony's a C. Several factors contributed to the C, but a higher than average MRSA and *C. diff.* infections rates played a part. Those outcome measures were derived from April 2014-March 2015 CMS data, and likely reflect, at least in part, the ineffectiveness of alcohol-based cleaners against resistant organisms.<sup>2</sup>

I have another pressing safety concern about St. Anthony's, and that is fire safety. The first St. Anthony's burned to the ground in 1949, killing at least 76 people. The Effingham community rallied around the Sisters, and the current St. Anthony's Memorial structure opened in 1954. When I had students in that facility, those who were

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<sup>1</sup> *Mother Mary Ann Brown Newcomb: Effingham Civil War Nurse.* (Cincinnati, BeeSquared Publishing, 2013): ii.

<sup>2</sup> [www.hospitalsafetyscore.org/Hospital Safety Score for St. Anthony's Memorial Hospital](http://www.hospitalsafetyscore.org/Hospital%20Safety%20Score%20for%20St.%20Anthony's%20Memorial%20Hospital), accessed 5/20/2016 & 8/29/2020.

not from the area often remarked on the frequency and thoroughness of fire drills. As the county museum nurse historian, I have researched, lectured and written about the 1949 fire for a number of years.<sup>3</sup>

The lesson from that fire are painful and numerous, so I was sure they would be long-lasting. I was dismayed when St. Anthony's had a surprise JCA visit in the May of 2017 that revealed deficiencies severe enough to lead to a Preliminary Denial of Accreditation decision. Seven of the deficiencies were directly related to fire safety. Examples include: (1) The hospital maintains the integrity of the means of egress. (2) The hospital provides and maintains fire alarm systems. These are *exactly* the same kind of problems that triggered the loss of life and property in 1949. The May 2017 deficiencies were apparently remedied, as the Effingham hospital's Full Accreditation status was regained on August 1, 2017. In contrast, Sarah Bush has had continual Full Accreditation status for many years.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, I believe competition could clear up fogginess in organizational mission. Both hospitals are community hospitals. Sarah Bush's stated mission is to **"provide exceptional care for all and create healthy communities."** The tie between care and community is clear.

When the Hospital Sisters came to America in 1875, their mission was also clear, to **"care for the sick and poor in their homes."** They were successful, so it wasn't long before an 18 bed St. Anthony's Hospital was constructed with the help of the people of the community, to serve the sick and the poor from that community.

St. Anthony's stated mission today is to: **"to reveal and embody Christ's healing love for all people through our high quality Franciscan health care ministry."** At least for me, it's hard to discern what that actually means and how it connects the hospital to the people in the Effingham community. I sincerely hope St. Anthony's is able to clarify its mission.

Mission cannot be accomplished without strong leadership. I have never been introduced to the Sarah Bush CEO, but I do know his life began in a Teutopolis family with a reputation for honesty and a history of solid achievement.

It is my opinion that if Sarah Bush is willing to expand its services locally, they should be granted the Certificate of Need. The people in the Effingham area deserve the opportunity to make an informed choice about the best place to go for frequently utilized health care services.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,



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<sup>3</sup> "Newborns, Women and the Elderly: Stories of Some of the Victims, *The Quarterly: Journal of the Illinois State Genealogical Society*, Vol 51, No 3 (2019): 147-157: "No Way Out: The 1949 St. Anthony's Hospital Fire," *Historic Illinois*, Sep/Oct 2019: 21-25.

<sup>4</sup> JCA Accreditation History, St. Anthony's Memorial Hospital, and Sarah Bush Lincoln Health Care Center, accessed 20 August 2020 @[www.qualitycheck.org](http://www.qualitycheck.org)