

**From:** [Sharma, Meghana](#)  
**To:** [DPH.HFSRB.PublicHearings](#)  
**Subject:** [External] Testimony for saving Mercy Hospital and Medical Center  
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To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Meghana Sharma and I worked as an Emergency Room Technician at Mercy Hospital and Medical Center from June 2015-August 2017. I believe the City must take action to save Mercy from closure immediately. Mercy Hospital serves a vital function by ensuring equitable access to quality healthcare in an underserved community. Removing this hospital will negatively affect the health of thousands of individuals who count on the providers, resources, and numerous services offered at Mercy.

As a safety net hospital, Mercy has committed to providing care to vulnerable patients regardless of their ability to pay. With over 50,000 ER visits and 3,500 elective surgeries a year, it is evident that thousands of Chicagoans rely on the services provided by Mercy. In a city where eight major hospitals have already closed in the past two decades, we as a community cannot afford to lose another. Governor JB Pritzker and the City of Chicago must act now to allocate funds to save Mercy hospital and commit to saving other troubled hospitals in the South Side area.

From my own experience, Emergency Rooms in Chicago are already overburdened with patients causing extremely long wait times and overflowing waiting rooms. This potentially can lead to dangerous situations for severely ill or contagious patients. Many of these Emergency Room patients ultimately need to be admitted and observed with chronic or underlying health conditions. Removing Mercy as a resource for these patients will cause immeasurable damage to the public health of the community because it will remove a crucial healthcare access point.

We are also in a global pandemic and healthcare crisis. We do not know what the future will hold in terms of long term effects of COVID-19. My own mother was diagnosed as a Covid-19 long hauler and suffered for months after her initial infection. This illustrates the need for inpatient services to be available to the community, and this is especially imperative for black and brown communities. We need to support and uplift these communities who are disproportionately at risk for contracting and dying of COVID-19. We need City Councilors and the appropriate stakeholders to commit to dismantling the structural racism present in the healthcare system and ensure that these communities will continue to have access to treatment.

Healthcare is a human right and the City needs to support that right by taking the necessary steps to keep Mercy hospital open. Forcing patients in communities with less access to healthcare travel EVEN farther for life-saving interventions and treatment is absolutely unacceptable. With the future of the global pandemic uncertain and the data proving Chicago's rising infection and death rate, the City and Governor JB Pritzker must act in the best interest of the public health of the South side of Chicago and immediately provide the funds necessary to keep Mercy Hospital and Medical Center open.

Sincerely,

Meghana Sharma, MPH  
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