

From: [Friend, Lauren](#)
To: [DPH.HFSRB.PublicHearings](#)
Subject: [External] Statement in Opposition of Mercy Closing
Date: Monday, November 2, 2020 4:47:25 PM

To Whom It May Concern:

It has come to my attention that Mercy Hospital located in the South Side of Chicago, which serves an already vulnerable population of 1.1 million people (nearly a third of the city's population), has announced its intention to close. I appreciate everything you have done for Chicago, and I implore you to continue to advocate and use your power to help your constituents have access to health care, especially during this pandemic. Closing Mercy Hospital would further imperil the population it serves and would be an act of negligence if we allow this to happen.

COVID-19 has demonstrated a predilection to harm latino, black, and other underserved communities, where health disparities are already endemic. It is essential that we do what it takes to protect these communities from yet another hit. With the recent closure of Metro-South Medical center in Blue Island and the prior closure of Michael Reese Hospital, Mercy has taken on a larger role as a safety net hospital for many within Chicago's South side.

The South side of Chicago is already a health care desert. When not in a pandemic, the hospitals that serve this community exist at high capacity if not full capacity. There is no room for a hospital to close in this area. Mercy provides vital prenatal care as one of the busiest and largest labor and delivery units in the area, is the receiving hospital for the city's largest homeless shelter, and is a cardiac and stroke center. More than any other medical emergencies, strokes and heart attacks require the closest proximity for a patient's survival. The population Mercy Hospital serves are currently expected to live 10 years shorter than the populations in neighboring communities. If Mercy Hospital closes, it could very well mean that the disparity in life expectancy would further widen.

Mercy Hospital has been a pillar throughout the city's history. It was the first chartered hospital in Chicago, second hospital in Chicago, and is the longest standing hospital in Chicago. It was a safe haven for the patients during the Chicago fire of 1871 and treated President Roosevelt after he was shot during an assassination attempt. Mercy is the only teaching hospital on the eastern shore between Northwestern Memorial and University of Chicago, an area comprising approximately 160 city blocks. Training health care workers at Mercy leads to more leaders who are passionate about treating the underserved in Chicago. This is an invaluable investment for the city's future.

This pandemic has been devastating to everyone, causing crises in both physical and mental health. It has also been fiscally devastating to the state, city, businesses, hospitals, and all your constituents. We are all hurting, but Mercy Hospital can not be another loss this community endures. It is in your hands to stop this. Mercy hospital is owned by Trinity Health, who has made this decision. There have been unofficial reports that there are parties interested in buying the hospital, but Trinity has not responded to these offers. We ask that you use the power given to you by your constituents to advocate for our community. We ask you to urge Trinity Health to reach an agreement that results in the preservation of Mercy Hospital and their commitment to serving those who need it most.

Respectfully,

Lauren Friend MD

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