From: Ryan McGraw
To: DPH.HFSRB.PublicHearings
Subject: [External] Mercy Hospital Closure
Date: Monday, November 23, 2020 9:55:22 AM

Mercy Hospital has served the Chicago south side communities for over 150 years and is now set too close in 2021. Closing Mercy hospital would have an devastating impact on the communities it serves. In the communities it serves resides a predominantly black and brown population. Mercy Hospital serves more than 50,000 patients a year, most of who are economically challenged, underserved, underprivileged and uninsured residents of the south and west sides of Chicago each year. More than 80% of this population rely on Medicaid, Medicare, are uninsured or use other public insurance to help pay for life-sustaining, vital healthcare needs each year. (Chicago Sun Times)

With four hospitals closing on the south and west sides of Chicago since 2018, Mercy Hospital serves as an important role as a safety net for hospital for southside residents. Given the rising cost of health care, it is important that Chicago's south and west side residents know that there is a hospital nearby they can rely on that won't turn them away based on their ability to pay or the type of insurance they have. This is especially crucial for people with disabilities, who often require care for a primary condition such as a physical disability and other secondary medical conditions such as high blood pressure or diabetes. These most vulnerable Chicago residents need the security of knowing there is a hospital close to them that will not turn them away in their time of need.

For patients with disabilities, accessing healthcare is not as simple as boarding public transportation to easily travel to receive necessary healthcare. Accessible transportation can take hours or even days to arrange and use. Therefore, getting to another hospital several miles away poses a real barrier to medical care. Further, these barriers increase time to treatment during medical emergencies, especially for those who are disabled or elderly, resulting in poorer medical outcomes.

Closing Mercy hospital would be another blow to Chicago's southside, impoverished Black and Brown communities. that already face a lack of quality healthcare. There have been a disproportionate and frightening amount of COVID-19 cases and deaths in on the south side of Chicago in contrast to the northside of the city. The fact that a disproportionate number of people are suffering due to COVID in Black and Brown communities only exemplifies the lack of quality healthcare access experienced here every single day. Mercy offers specialty clinics such as a maternity ward and a substance abuse clinic. These essential services are found at few other south side hospitals.

Representatives of Mercy hospital attempt to soften the blow the closing will have on the community by claiming that Mercy will still offer outpatient services and that there is a transition plan in place. However, Mercy patients, who are already experiencing a disparity in healthcare. still wrestle with many questions, including: “what hospital can I go to if I am on medicaid or uninsured?” “Where can I go if I get COVID?” or “Where will I go for specialty care or in a medical emergency?.”

In January of 2020, the Southside Transformation Plan was created by the South Side Coalition. This $1.1 billion plan would have expanded access to quality preventive care and services, increased access to coordinated care, and addressed significant, historic health inequities faced by South Side residents. Community members wanted to build new hospitals and outpatient clinics before any existing hospitals closed. (Gazette Chicago) The plan called for the state of Illinois to contribute $520 million to fund the proposed transformation plan. However, the legislature declined to fund the plan and the Southside coalition that drew up the plan disbanded in May

We call on Governor Pritzker and the Illinois legislature to release the funds needed to save fMercy hospital. South Side residents cannot afford to lose another hospital when their healthcare options are already so sparse. This community needs healthcare expansion, not the disastrous dismantling of healthcare service options for residents in need. Finally, we, the Task-force for Attendant Services, rally in support of Mercy hospital and the population it serves, asking that it’s funding be restored so that the countless residents who rely on the vital services it provides can continue to survive in the face an ever present need for increasingly accessible affordable healthcare services.

Access Living's
Task Force for Attendant Services

Ryan McGraw
Access Living
Health/Home and Community Based Services Community Organizer
Phone: 312-640-2125

Access Living staff are working from home because of the Coronavirus outbreak. Our office building is closed to the public and we will continue to re-evaluate the situation as it develops. We are still responding to inquiries via phone (Voice: (312) 640-2100; Toll Free: (800) 613-8549; TTY: (312) 640-2102; Toll Free TTY: (888) 243-7003), email and our website. We appreciate your patience as we continue our work. Please visit us at www.AccessLiving.org for additional updates.

Census 2020 is coming up. To ensure our community gets the funding we need for independent living services, it is essential that people with disabilities are counted. This March and April, make sure you get counted!

Lead On LIVE - Access Living's Gala Reimagined is now available online
Virtual. Accessible. Open to all.
Watch it here.