



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS 62706

JB PRITZKER
GOVERNOR

December 12, 2020

Ms. Debra Savage
Chairwoman
Illinois Health Facilities & Services Review Board
525 West Jackson Street
Springfield, Illinois 62761

Dear Ms. Savage,

I am writing regarding the announced discontinuation of all of Mercy Hospital and Medical Center's categories of service and all of Mercy Hospital's authorized inpatient beds. Located on Chicago's South Side, Mercy Hospital is one of the jewels of the community and a critical economic driver and health care provider. It is with profound sadness and frustration that I express my objection to Trinity Health's planned closure of this hospital.

Mercy has provided critical health care services to the area's 1.1 million vulnerable population for decades and has been a critical partner in supplying services to the community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

While no Illinoisan is immune to the COVID-19 pandemic, communities of color that Mercy primarily serves have been hardest hit by its effects – a result of longstanding disparities in health care system access and delivery, particularly for Black and Brown Illinoisans. Closing Mercy hospital will unfortunately only further deepen these disparities.

In October, I wrote a letter to Michael Slubowski, President & CEO of Trinity Health and last week I followed up the letter with a personal call to him, urging Trinity Health to reconsider the Mercy hospital closure. Instead of closing Mercy, I urged him to join the General Assembly and my administration in passing hospital transformation legislation, that could benefit Mercy and other safety-net hospitals. Also, members of my senior staff have been in close communication with Trinity Health and Mercy leadership for months to express our desire to forgo the closure of Mercy hospital and provide financial flexibility to avoid closure.

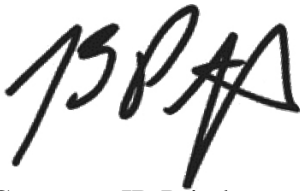
My administration continues to champion innovative solutions with the goal of helping to stabilize our state's health care system. My administration has worked with members of the General Assembly and stakeholders to renew the Hospital Assessment Program, a \$3.8 billion program that is now bringing in over \$250 million additional federal dollars to the state annually. The program consists of \$450 million in additional funding for hospitals since the last assessment. In addition,

we worked with members of the General Assembly and stakeholders to distribute funding to all hospitals in Illinois, while prioritizing hospitals like Mercy that serve vulnerable populations. With this new influx of funding, the payments to 24 safety net hospitals increased by roughly \$85 million and Mercy specifically increased by \$4.4 million. In addition, my administration released over \$140 million in federal CARES dollars for safety nets, long-term care facilities and federally qualified health centers.

During the spring legislative session, members of my administration attempted to pass legislation with \$150 million in hospital transformation funding that could have benefitted Mercy. Unfortunately, members of the General Assembly could not reach an agreement. The decision was ultimately made not to include hospital transformation within the Hospital Assessment program package that passed into law.

The effects of COVID-19, combined with the announced closure of Mercy hospital, demonstrates the need for health care transformation in many ways now more than ever. The pandemic has only heightened the essential need for more equitable health care access and delivery, particularly in Black and Brown communities and for those who are uninsured and or underinsured. I look forward to working with the General Assembly, stakeholders and community leaders this upcoming legislative session to pass hospital transformation legislation, which will be a necessary component to tackling social determinants of health and disparities in access that all too many communities face, especially Black and Brown communities.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JB Pritzker", written in a stylized, cursive-like font.

Governor JB Pritzker