

June 25, 2021

Ms. Debra Savage, Chair
Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board
25 West Jefferson Street, 2nd Floor
Springfield, IL 62761

RE: Orthollinois Surgery Center Elgin, LLC ("Orthollinois")
Project No. 20-040, Letter of Concern Regarding Safety Net Services

Dear Ms. Savage,

The pandemic left its mark in many ways, and our healthcare providers bore the brunt of the last 16 months. Now, as we begin to see the light at the end of the tunnel, thanks in large part to the vaccination efforts of our local hospitals, doctors and public health departments, we are also beginning to understand the ripple effects of weeks spent in isolation, under lock-down, and outside our normal routines.

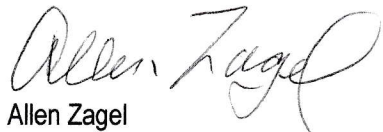
According to the State of Illinois, opioid overdose deaths increased 30% in 2020 when compared to 2019. Coupled with startling data from the Kane County Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) that one in eight of Kane County residents are unable to access the mental health services that they need – in part as a result of cost – this presents a real challenge for our community. Too often, people struggling with mental health challenges use alcohol or drugs to self-medicate. It's even more likely when people are kept in isolation – away from the routines and people that may have helped with their recovery – and especially likely if they don't know where to go or can't afford care.

The Kane County CHNA prioritized behavioral health resources as our communities most pressing need – greater than access to primary care, addressing food insecurity and weight management, and even treating infectious diseases and vaccination efforts. Increasing the available mental health and substance abuse resources for residents is priority number one. I urge the Board to consider how Project No. 20-040, a proposed specialty surgery center submitted by Orthollinois, might contribute to this goal.

Instead of investing in much needed mental health, substance abuse and primary care resources, this project would establish another surgery center for orthopedics across the street from a hospital that provides these same services. While our local hospital spend considerable resources to help our community heal and grow – including programs to assist residents struggling with substance abuse and mental health – this surgery center would be solely focused on serving a patient population that already has plenty of high quality options. Put simply, we don't need it.

I urge the Board to oppose this project so that Kane County can invest in the healthcare services we need most, like better access to mental health services and substance abuse treatment.

Thank you for your consideration,


Allen Zagel

cc: Courtney Avery, Administrator