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March 28, 2021
Courtney Avery, Administrator
Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board
525 West Jefferson, Second Floor
Springfield, IL 62761

Re: Quincy Medical Health Hospital, Project #20-044

Dear Ms. Avery,

I am the Executive Director of Transitions of Western Illinois, an organization which provides an array of mental health, developmental disabilities, and other rehabilitate services in Adams County and other West Central Illinois counties. We are taking a neutral position on this proposal because we lack the detailed information needed to accurately analyze the impact of this proposed hospital on our existing service system (positive, negative, or neutral). We trust however that your board will have access to actuarial and utilization data which should guide you in that determination.

However, we want you to know the potential impact that a significantly weakened Blessing Hospital unable to continue to support inpatient psychiatric services would have on individuals we serve. I will outline that in this letter.

I attended the recent public hearing and was able to hear from Quincy Medical Group about how they believe a small format hospital could positively impact the service delivery system in our area by injecting competition in a manner which could drive improvements in quality, access, and cost. I also heard Blessing Hospital's position that the additional hospital would be a wasteful duplication of scarce healthcare resources and potentially weaken the ability of Blessing Hospital to meet its mission of serving all residents of the community regardless of ability to pay or profitability of specific service lines.

As an employer, the possibility of decreasing the price of healthcare through the introduction of additional competition is an attractive one and would be a good cause for the Board's approval of the development of this additional hospital.

However, as a mission-based organization, Transition also needs to look at this proposal from the potential impact it could have on people we serve and their access to care when inpatient psychiatric hospitalization is necessary. Our organization was created over 65 years ago to help people gain access to mental health care in the community without needing to travel to state hospitals or other parts of the state or region to receive community-based care. With the next closest inpatient psychiatric

hospital being 110 miles from Quincy, Blessing Hospital plays a unique role for people who need access to local inpatient treatment. The availability of inpatient psychiatric services is something that I think many take for granted as they may not be aware that many community hospitals like Blessing across the state have closed inpatient psychiatric units citing their feasibility from a business perspective.

Transitions' provides mobile crisis response services to individuals in psychiatric crisis in Adams, Hancock, and Pike Counties. Each year we respond to an average of 700 calls for mobile crisis assistance, often resulting in the need for inpatient psychiatric hospitalization. Even with the availability of hospital psychiatric units at Blessing, we often are required to seek admission for patients at hospitals outside Quincy, most often several hours away from here. If increased financial stress leads Blessing Hospital to close its psychiatric inpatient units at some future date, the result would be increased costs to transport people to inpatient units in other parts of the state as well as increased emergency room boarding of people waiting (sometimes for days) for a bed to open up. This would be a very negative consequence for people in need of inpatient psychiatric care regardless of ability to pay. In the worse case scenario, the service would no longer exist.

In summary, it's difficult for us to know the impact of the opening of this hospital. We are trusting the Board's ability to analyze the potential impact of this proposal from a dispassionate and objective perspective. We hope our information will help you know that there could be real consequences if the decision results in destabilization of Blessing Hospital or for that matter Quincy Medical Group as well. Both are important to our community.

Sincerely,



Mark Schmitz, LCSW, CADC
Executive Director
Transitions of Western Illinois