

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

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

Dear Ms. Avery,

I am writing in opposition of Quincy Medical Group Hospital. I have been with Blessing for 17 years. Over the years I've held a variety of positions, I have worked my way up and across work streams and I currently serve as the Innovation and Growth Project Manager. In this capacity I provide independent leadership and overall direction for strategic plan implementation and a liaison to the health system for Certificate of Need applications and processes to ensure compliance of all requirements bestowed by the state.

The nature of my work allows me the privilege of working with almost every department and division of the Blessing Health System. This firsthand knowledge means I not only get to witness the greatness of this work we do every day, I also get to support the teams that work tirelessly to save lives and still find time to think of ways to identify new ways to better serve our patients. My family gets their care here, the work I do is extremely gratifying, but more than that this work is personal.

I have worked hand-in-hand with the Blessing leadership to understand the case that Quincy Medical Group (QMG) is making that claims there is a need for a second, small-format hospital and we can't understand their rationale for this request.

Quincy with a population of 40,000 has already gone through a very deliberate and methodical process of hospital consolidation from two hospitals to a single hospital. The duplication of another hospital with less services would not be the best use of the region's limited resources. The approval of this second hospital at a time when our industry is moving from acute hospital care to outpatient care will have an adverse impact to Blessing Health System which will directly impact the economic base of our community.

We are the safety net provider for our community, the proposed second hospital does not have a care model that is designed to support the needs of everyone in our community. Contrary to their argument that this form of competition will grow the market, duplication of hospitals in our region in this case just 3.5 miles away in rural America is not an economic grower it will actually have a negative impact to the community for years to come.

I want to see our region grow, but it needs to be smart growth. We also need a strong hospital and we're very fortunate to have that in Blessing. We do not achieve better care or growth by adding a second, unnecessary hospital.

I know I am not alone in my opinion. I've read almost every letter both in support and in opposition to this application. I've read almost every letter because I care, but also because I

want to gain a deeper understanding of the argument in favor of the QMG application. However, even after reading all the support letters, I have yet to see a fully articulated argument outlining the need for a second hospital. Considering this is a certificate of need application, the need argument is woefully absent. I've read endless form letters sent in by QMG staff members, stating that the second hospital "will be patient-centered, physician-led and state-of-the art, expanding access to high-quality healthcare services while reducing costs." They further state "the new hospital will allow QMG doctors to care for patients across all care settings, including an overnight stay, if necessary." These are nice sound bites and are nice to hear, but don't mean anything without any explanation of what they mean for the patient experience, but perhaps what's most obvious here is that they don't point to gap in services missing in the region, nor do they point to fulfilling an unmet need. Frankly, this is just empty healthcare marketing jargon.

I'd like to point to the fact that for Blessing we're more than soundbites, we're living these values every day and investing in the patient experience. Blessing is already patient-centered with physicians and medical experts leading many of the committees and decision-making bodies that directly impact patient outcomes – and it must be said, QMG doctors sit in prominent roles in many of those bodies and importantly, and lastly, no hospital in the area is more advanced or state of the art than Blessing.

There are also a significant batch of letters that point to the impact that the second hospital would have on the mall redevelopment. Many of those letters make the case that the second hospital, built in the parking lot would "... also benefit stores and restaurants located here at the mall by helping increase foot traffic and expand our businesses." Frankly, the mall redevelopment, while important to the Quincy region should not fall on the shoulders of a hospital, nor should it be a reason to build a second hospital. This is a plea for economic revitalization, not an argument of need for a second hospital. I worry that allowing this line of thinking to become the reason this body approves this application will set everyone up for failure.

I'd like to push back on one additional argument made by the support letters, in particular the argument that "the events of the past year have made it ever apparent that our community needs additional medical capacity." This is a mischaracterization and shows a clear lack of understanding of how Blessing and the region responded to the pandemic. During the pandemic Blessing created 85 negative pressure rooms, at our peak we had 102 patients with COVID in our 327 beds, we developed a drive- thru testing facility and 24- hour call center for the community, assisted the public health department with tracers and vaccination, provided community education weekly, expanded telemedicine, and kept our workforce employed fully throughout the COVID epidemic. To be blunt, QMG did not do any of these things, if they had the capacity or the concern for the community they didn't demonstrate it during our greatest time of need. Further, their proposed second hospital would not have the capacity to house or care for the highest acuity patients, that responsibility would still be shouldered by Blessing. The proposed second hospital is not going to help us when we inevitably face a second pandemic.

On the other hand, there are many bespoke letters in opposition of this project. There are many letters who are grateful for the work of both Blessing and QMG, but who can see the unintended consequences and the harm that would result. There are many letters calling out "should they [QMG] be looking to fill an unmet need in the community rather than duplicating services?" It's

impossible to in good conscious move forward with the proposed project without carefully answering that question. Moving forward with the project would mean that the second hospital would siphon off patients from Blessing leaving us to care for the highest acuity patients, while also removing our Sole Hospital designation, which would also leave in financial peril and ultimately jeopardizing our ability to adequately serve our patient base. This benefits no one.

Many of the opposition letters point out in clear terms that there is no need for a second hospital. As one letter states: "there is no need for duplicative medical in-patient services for two hospitals in Quincy with a population of 40,000. In the Facility Board Hospital Profile CY 2019, Blessing's facility occupancy rate was 62.5% and Obstetrics/Gynecology occupancy rate was 26.6%." We are struggling to understand where the proposed need is for this project. Hospital usage data doesn't signal an unmet need and the demographic data doesn't predict an increase in population.

We cannot ignore the facts – and this application is indefensible in its glaring lack of facts. I am a life-long Quincy resident, I work in Quincy and I am raising my family here. I am committed to see the region grow and I know many others are too. I want what is best for my family and my neighbors, I also want is best for all of Quincy's families and this means that at this time we cannot support this application.

It is obvious that the proposed second hospital is not needed and would only add stress to our region's healthcare system. I urge you to oppose Quincy Medical Group Hospital, project #20-044.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sarah A. Stegeman". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with the first name being the most prominent.

Sarah A. Stegeman