



C H I C A G O  
H E A L T H E Q U I T Y  
C O A L I T I O N

March 19, 2021

Dr. Debra Savage, Chairwoman  
Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board  
525 W. Jefferson St., Second Floor  
Springfield, IL 62761

Re: Exemption E-003-21, Mercy Hospital and Medical Center

Dear Chairwoman Savage and Review Board members,

The Chicago Health Equity Coalition (CHEC) is asking that the Health Facilities and Services Review Board either delay its decision on this exemption application, or deny it pending future consideration. CHEC believes that all groups that are willing and able to acquire and operate Mercy Hospital and Medical Center should have the opportunity to make a full proposal to be vetted in a transparent process.

The Chicago Health Equity Coalition is the coalition of health care professionals, community organizations, labor unions, and churches who have been fighting to save Mercy Hospital since the closure was announced in July 2020. Our goal is to stop the closure of Mercy Hospital and other hospitals in vulnerable communities on the South and West sides of Chicago and work to ensure that all Illinoisans have equitable access to health care.

CHEC objects to the current process in which Trinity Health is selecting the next owner of Mercy Hospital, when Trinity has failed to keep the hospital solvent and is systematically gutting services in its determination to close Mercy Hospital in defiance of the HFSRB denial of the application for closure. Community stakeholders, not Trinity Health, must have the primary voice in a transparent process to choose the best owner and operator of Mercy Hospital.

CHEC is committed to ensuring that Mercy Hospital remains a full-service safety net and teaching hospital for generations to come. To that end, CHEC has developed a rubric that includes our expectations for restoring critical services, governance, financial stability, transparency, collective bargaining, and employee retention/rehiring such that Mercy Hospital is able to provide comprehensive health care in our community for the long term. CHEC believes that **all interested parties should have an opportunity to present a proposal** that includes a

clear public plan to restore Mercy to a fully operational hospital with the essential services outlined in the Chicago Health Equity Coalition List of Demands (attached).

The rush to approve Insight Chicago is not in the best interest of the community or the state, since Insight is not offering a long term commitment to operate Mercy as a full-service safety net and teaching hospital. As the HFSRB determined in December 2020, the closure of Mercy Hospital would create a public health crisis, and approving Insight at this time does not offer the long term solution that is needed.

The charge of the HFSRB includes “planning for and development of health care facilities needed for comprehensive health care especially in areas where the health planning process has identified unmet needs.” CHEC is aligned with this mission to ensure that every resident of Chicago and Illinois has access to quality healthcare. We implore this board to vote “no” on this exemption application, to allow all those interested in acquiring the hospital to submit proposals in an open and transparent process, and ensure that the best long-term solution for Illinois citizens is achieved.

Urgently and respectfully,

The Chicago Health Equity Coalition

*SEIU Health Care Illinois/Indiana/Kansas/Missouri*

*Kenwood Oakland Community Organization*

*Lugenia Burns Hope Center*

*Mothers Opposed to Violence Everywhere*

*Teamsters Local 743*

*Mt. Carmel Missionary Baptist Church*

*White Coats for Black Lives*

*Black Youth Project 100*

*National Nurses United*

*Action Now*

*SEIU Local 73*

*St. James Catholic Church*

*Youth Opposed to Violence Everywhere*

*Southside NAACP*

## **Chicago Health Equity Coalition Evaluation Rubric and List of Demands for the Buyer of Mercy Hospital**

### **1. Commitment to Restore and Maintain Mercy as a Full-Service Safety-Net and Teaching Hospital**

- Restoration of a Comprehensive, fully staffed full-service 25-bed Emergency Room which accepts ALS ambulances. Restoration of a fully staffed high-risk OBGYN unit.
- Restoration of the hospital as a Stroke and STEMI center.
- Commitment and Plan for maintenance of an inpatient behavioral health floor/unit at Mercy Hospital for patients who need admission for psychiatric illnesses as well as outpatient behavioral health services.
- Plan for providing COVID testing and vaccination for community residents of all ages.
- A commitment to outpatient disease prevention measures (outpatient behavioral health clinic, re-establishment of primary care, cancer screening). Full transparency on the specific physician or care groups that will be staffing these services and updates on the negotiation process during weekly meetings in the early days of hospital acquisition.
- Plan for restoration of the hospital as a teaching institution with support for residencies in areas of podiatry, OBGYN, surgery, radiology, internal medicine and emergency medicine. Full support for rotating students that provide healthcare (medical students, nursing students, physician assistants, respiratory therapists, etc.)

### **2. Governance**

- Community experts must have equitable representation on Mercy Hospital's governing board, with full voting rights and responsibilities (e.g., a board of directors with 9 members would have 3 administrators, 3 medical experts, and 3 community experts).

### **3. Transparency**

- Full transparency with CHEC concerning timeline of re-opening and expanding services at Mercy. Bi-weekly meetings with representatives from CHEC for the first two months of acquisition with full transparency on specific actions being taken and short-term deadlines.

### **4. Financial Stability**

- Comprehensive plan for capital and operating expenses, with transparency on all funding sources.
- Commitment to accept Medicare/Medicaid and provide charity care, with specific plans to cover the cost of under-reimbursed care.

### **5. Collective Bargaining and Employee Retention/Rehiring**

- Plan for Bargaining in good faith with current unions at Mercy Hospital with the right for all workers to organize without intimidation.
- Active effort for retention and rehiring of existing Mercy Hospital staff members and staff members/physician groups that have been forced out as a result of the closure.