

Dr. and Mrs. Larry R. Jones _____

100 Fairway Drive
Harrisburg, IL 62946

June, 30, 2021

Courtney Avery, Administrator
Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board
525 West Jefferson Street (2nd floor)
Springfield, IL 62761

Re: Southern Illinois Healthcare affiliation with Harrisburg Medical Center

Dear Ms. Avery,

My name is Larry Jones. I'm a board certified family physician and a board member of Harrisburg Medical Center. I practiced primary care medicine, utilizing Harrisburg Medical Center as my main hospital, for 37 years.

Harrisburg Medical Center serves a rural population. Many are poor. Many are elderly. Having specialty services available close by will be a godsend for many of our patients.

During those 37 years, I observed firsthand that many health problems which were formerly completely managed by primary care physicians like me now require specialty care. Strokes and heart attacks are two common examples which now always require care from specialists in neurology and cardiology respectively. This change in practice patterns, coupled with the shortage of specialty care in rural areas like Harrisburg, creates a real barrier to timely access to care for many.

I vividly remember a lady I will call Gladys Murphy. Mrs. Murphy was in her late 80's and widowed. She lived alone in a small village, unfortunately named Muddy, Illinois. When we found a small tumor, suspicious for malignancy, in her left kidney, I arranged consultation with a urologist. Sadly, Mrs. Murphy, having no family and no close friends, was completely unable to travel the 50-60 miles necessary to see a urologist. A significant delay in her care ensued. Finally, members of a local church agreed to drive her and she received the care she needed.

Ready availability of specialty services achieved by the affiliation of Harrisburg Medical Center and Southern Illinois Healthcare will eliminate challenges such as the one faced by Mrs. Murphy. Health care delivery will drastically improve in southeastern Illinois. Yes, lives will be saved.

Another benefit of the planned affiliation between these two organizations will be the access to cutting edge technology. Southern Illinois Healthcare utilizes an electronic health record called Epic. Epic, a state of the art technology, is not affordable for small, independent hospitals like Harrisburg Medical Center. Having spent countless hours trying to track down the medical records or test results of my patients, I know for a fact that having instant access to health records through a system-wide electronic record will improve efficiency and reduce health care costs.

The joining together of Harrisburg Medical Center and Southern Illinois Healthcare is a wonderful advancement for southeastern Illinois. Patients, physicians, and whole communities will benefit. I enthusiastically encourage the board to approve this affiliation.

Thank you.



Larry R. Jones, M.D.