



## SIH System Office

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Hello, my name is Woody Thorne and I am privileged to serve in the role of Vice President of Community Affairs for Southern Illinois Healthcare. I am very happy to be providing testimony this morning in support of the affiliation between Harrisburg Medical Center and SIH.

Saline County, the county in which Harrisburg Medical Center is located, has high elderly and poor populations. The poverty rate is the 7<sup>th</sup> highest in the entire state and is over 50% higher than the Illinois average. They have high rates of cancer, diabetes, and other chronic illnesses. Saline County has federal designations as both a Health Professional Shortage Area and a Medically Underserved Area. The communities served by Harrisburg Medical Center are among the most vulnerable in the state.

SIH is very proud of our commitment to improving the health and well-being of all the communities we serve. Southern Illinois Healthcare provides a considerable amount of community benefit and charity care to southern Illinois, investing in numerous programs and services to improve the health status of our region. We work closely with Federally Qualified Health Centers, schools, local government, health departments, faith-based institutions, senior centers, and other agencies to better meet community needs and expand the capacity of other organizations to serve those who are most in need. We take our mission to heart. This affiliation will enable Southern Illinois Healthcare to honor and extend that mission to Harrisburg Medical Center and the southeastern Illinois communities they serve.

Over the past year, SIH brought in just over \$3.8 million in new grant contracts and we consistently manage a grant portfolio of more than \$4.5 million to further projects around infrastructure, educational and clinical programs, equipment, and research. We have a strong partnership with Washington University in St Louis, serving as their rural perspective for National Institutes of Health grants that provide funding for educational outreach and clinical efforts. The proposed affiliation will certainly lead to increased grant funding opportunities for Harrisburg Medical Center, which will in turn have a substantial impact on improving the healthcare needs of the vulnerable patients of southeastern Illinois.

I strongly support the affiliation between Southern Illinois Healthcare and Harrisburg Medical Center, and I appreciate the opportunity to share this information today. Thank you.