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Transcript of Public Hearing

Date: January 26, 2022

Case: In Re: Javon Bea Hospital-Rockton Avenue Campus [#E-056-21]

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ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
HEALTH FACILITIES AND SERVICES REVIEW BOARD
BEFORE HEARING OFFICER APRIL SIMMONS

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IN RE: :
Public Comments :
Regarding : Project No.
Discontinuation : E-056-21
Application for :
Exemption for Javon :
Bea Hospital - Rockton :
Avenue Campus. :

- - - - - x

HEARING in accordance with requirements of the
Illinois Health Facilities Planning Act
Conducted Virtually
Wednesday, January 26, 2022
1:03 p.m. CT

Job No.: 422348
Pages: 1 - 138
Reported By: Courtney Petros, RPR, CSR

1 Public hearing, conducted virtually:

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8 Pursuant to notice, before Courtney Petros, a

9 Certified Shorthand Reporter, Registered

10 Professional Reporter, and a Notary Public in and

11 for the State of Illinois.

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A P P E A R A N C E S

PRESENT:

ILLINOIS HEALTH FACILITIES AND SERVICES
REVIEW BOARD, by
APRIL SIMMONS, General Counsel
GEORGE ROATE, CON Reviewer
MICHAEL CONSTANTINO, IDPH Staff
MICHAEL MITCHELL, IDPH Staff
525 West Jefferson Street
Second Floor
Springfield, IL 62761
(217) 782-3516

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MS. SIMMONS: Good afternoon. My name is
3 April Simmons, and I am the general counsel for
4 the Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review
5 Board. This afternoon, we -- I will also be
6 acting as the hearing officer for today's
7 proceedings. Present with me today and
8 representing the Board are Mike Constantino,
9 George Roate, and Mike Mitchell.

10 On behalf of the State Board, thank you
11 for attending this public hearing for the
12 discontinuation of a 70-bed medical/surgical
13 category of service at Javon Bea Hospital.

14 As per the rules of the Illinois Health
15 Facilities and Services Review Board, I would like
16 to read the previously published legal notice into
17 the record.

18 Notice of public hearing and written
19 comment. Legal notice of public hearing and
20 opportunity for written comment. Notice of an
21 opportunity for public hearing and opportunity for
22 public comment.

23 In accordance with the requirements of the
24 Illinois Health Facilities Planning Act, notice is

1 given of the receipt of an application for
2 exemption to discontinue the 70-bed
3 medical/surgical category of service at Javon Bea
4 Hospital-Rockton, 2500 North Rockton Avenue,
5 Rockford, Illinois. And that's Exemption 056-21.
6 The applicants are Javon Bea Hospital and Mercy
7 Health Corporation.

8 A safety net impact statement and charity
9 care information have been provided as required.
10 Impact letters were sent to the health facilities
11 that maintain a medical/surgical category of
12 service within a geographic service area. There
13 is no cost to this project. The expected
14 completion date is upon State Board approval.

15 This exemption application was called
16 substantially complete on November 29th, 2021.
17 This discontinuation is tentatively scheduled to
18 be heard at the March 15, 2022, State Board
19 meeting. Written public comments on this
20 exemption application will be accepted by the
21 State Board no later than February 23rd, 2022.

22 Information regarding this hearing or any
23 other activity of the Illinois Health Facilities
24 and Services Review Board can be obtained at the

1 State Board's website. And that's
2 www2.illinois.gov/sites/hfsrb. As previously
3 stated, this public hearing is conducted by staff
4 of the Illinois Health Facilities and Services
5 Review Board pursuant to the Illinois Health
6 Facilities Planning Act.

7 The hearing is open to the public and
8 affords an opportunity for parties with interest
9 in the project to present written and/or verbal
10 comment relevant to the project. All allegations
11 or assertions should be relevant to the need for
12 the proposed project and be supported with copies
13 of documentation or materials that are printed or
14 typed on paper.

15 Please note that in order to ensure that
16 the Health Facilities and Services Review Board's
17 public hearings protect the privacy and maintain
18 the confidentiality of an individual's health
19 information, covered entities, as defined by the
20 Health Insurance Portability and Accountability
21 Acts of 1996, such as hospital providers, health
22 plans, and health care clearinghouses submitting
23 oral or written testimony that disclose protected
24 health information of individuals shall have a

1 valid written authorization from that individual.
2 The authorization shall allow the covered entity
3 to share the individual's protected health
4 information at this hearing.

5 I ask that you please limit your testimony
6 to two minutes. Prior to beginning your remarks,
7 please clearly state and spell your first and last
8 name. The applicant shall be afforded an
9 opportunity to provide a summary of the changes
10 requested within Exemption Application E-056-21.

11 Today's proceedings will begin with
12 representatives from Javon Bea Hospital.

13 Mitch -- okay. Mr. Bea, I believe you are
14 about to be unmuted. Mitch, can you unmute him,
15 please? You are unmuted, sir.

16 MR. BEA: Okay. I'll go ahead and get
17 started. Thank you, Ms. Simmons.

18 Good afternoon. My name is Javon Bea, and
19 I'm the president and CEO of Mercy Health. The
20 opening presentation today will include two parts.
21 Please note that the opening presentation is not
22 limited to two minutes, per the Board rules. I'll
23 begin with the nonclinical portion, and Dr. John
24 Dorsey will address the clinical aspects related

1 to our certificate of exemption.

2 It is my understanding that Mr. Tom
3 McNamara, the mayor of Rockford, requested this
4 public hearing, which I feel is necessary to give
5 you some background so you are aware of things
6 that might be brought up today.

7 Just as a little way of my background, I
8 grew up on the west side of Rockford with my 11
9 brothers and sisters. I graduated from Auburn
10 High School on the west side of Rockford and began
11 my career in health care at age 16 at Rockford
12 Memorial Hospital and now Javon Bea Hospital
13 Rockton.

14 The west side of Rockford holds a special
15 place in my heart, and I deeply care about that
16 hospital and the residents of the west side, as I
17 still have many relatives that live on the west
18 side. In fact, it's one of our reasons why Mercy
19 Health -- I've made sure, through my efforts, to
20 double our investment commitment in capital
21 improvements to the Rockford Campus site.

22 To date, we have invested over
23 \$100,650,000 in just six years. We had originally
24 committed -- Mercy Health did -- to invest

1 50 million in the campus over ten years. So we've
2 more than doubled that original commitment in six
3 years.

4 In June of 2018, however, our Rockton
5 Avenue Hospital suffered devastating flooding and
6 a ground floor laboratory, pharmacy, cancer
7 center, and many other clinical services were
8 completely destroyed. The water was waist high in
9 areas and caused over \$30 million in damage.

10 We were blessed by the fact that we were
11 building a new hospital in Riverside off I-90 and,
12 at that time, we were able to rush 200
13 construction tradesmen to the Rockton Avenue
14 Campus. They quickly built an alternative
15 temporary heating ventilation air conditioning
16 system, HVAC system, to keep bacteria, mold, and
17 other contaminants in the storm sewer water from
18 polluting the entire hospital and endangering our
19 inpatients through our normal HVAC system.

20 Having those 200 workers at the ready
21 saved the hospital from being shut down and,
22 ultimately, condemned by the State because these
23 contaminants would have gotten into the sheetrock,
24 ceiling tile, and all other materials throughout

1 the entire hospital.

2 That \$30 million on just the bottom level
3 alone required carrying everything out down to the
4 metal studs and totally disinfecting the metal
5 studs, tearing up all the flooring tile, ceiling
6 tile. It was totally down to the concrete walls
7 and the studs, which had to be decontaminated and
8 then totally built back new.

9 But the next time we have major flooding,
10 we will not be able to have these 200 workers at a
11 moment's notice. It's not a matter of if the
12 building will flood again but when. And at that
13 point, the hospital and Mercy's \$100 million
14 investment in the hospital building will be lost
15 to contamination.

16 After the 2018 flood, Mercy spent over
17 \$2 million to install flood doors in front of
18 various entrances to the hospital where the water
19 had come through and blocked up and bricked up
20 windows where the water had also poured in.

21 But last August, 2021, with another heavy
22 rainfall, the water came right up to the top of
23 the flood doors. And if it rained a little harder
24 or if another storm came in that night, the

1 hospital would have flooded, and the dirty storm
2 sewer water would have contaminated the hospital.

3 We have tried since 2018 to work
4 cooperatively with Mayor McNamara. The Rockford
5 engineering firm that also does the City of
6 Rockford's work consulted on the flooding project
7 and said that the Mayor needs to install a sewer
8 box culvert under Garfield Avenue from the west
9 edge of that Rockton Campus to Kent Creek to
10 handle the massive amount of water that drains to
11 the bottom of the bowl of 250 acres. The
12 hospital, unfortunately, happens to be at the
13 bottom of the bowl, and all the water from 250
14 acres surrounding the campus pours right to the
15 hospital.

16 The box culvert would be a \$6 million
17 project, but the Rockford engineering firm also
18 stated the City can invest a small amount of money
19 to finance a 30-year tax-exempt bond to pay for it
20 over 30 years. Mayor McNamara has refused to do
21 it, and, yet, he's spending 27 million to redesign
22 Wyman Street as part of their capital plan and
23 putting money into hotels and other nice-to-have
24 wants instead of needs.

1 If the Mayor continues to refuse to spend
2 a small amount of money for a tax-exempt bond to
3 prevent the Mercy Rockton Hospital from flooding,
4 this will cause the hospital to close to dozens of
5 medical services and 800 jobs on this Rockton
6 Avenue campus. Mercy Health has been in
7 litigation with the City and the Mayor to install
8 the box culvert, but the lack of action continues
9 to put the Rockton Avenue Hospital at risk, like
10 we saw just this past August.

11 Because our hospital is at the bottom of a
12 bowl, as I stated, when it rains, all of the 250
13 acres of neighborhoods around the hospital campus
14 pours to the hospital. Mercy Health installed a
15 retention pond on the campus that handles the rain
16 that falls directly onto the campus, but the
17 engineers state we cannot build a retention pond
18 large enough to handle the floodwater and storm
19 sewer water from 250 surrounding acres.

20 Because the Mayor has refused to put a box
21 culvert in to handle the water flowing onto our
22 campus, we cannot even buy adequate casualty
23 insurance to deal with any major future damage to
24 the hospital. No insurance company will

1 adequately insure Mercy, because Mercy Rockford
2 experienced this \$30 million in damage in 2018,
3 and the solution to keep it from happening again,
4 a box culvert by the City, is not in place.

5 Mercy's previous insurance company -- not
6 Mercy -- is also suing the City to recover their
7 \$27 million or the \$30 million of damage that they
8 paid, because the insurance company's legal
9 position is it was not an act of God that the
10 hospital flooded in 2018, but it was because the
11 City did not keep up its stormwater sewer
12 capacity, as the City allowed the 250 acres of
13 bare land around the hospital to be built and
14 developed over without a proper size stormwater
15 sewer. Again, it is not a matter of if the
16 hospital will flood again but when.

17 Unlike the 2011 agreement between the
18 Boards of OSF and Rockford Memorial Hospital in
19 2011, if their merger had been approved by the
20 FTC, the RMH board had approved OSF closing
21 Rockford Memorial Hospital completely in 2016.

22 Mercy Health, however, is committed to
23 keeping the campus and the hospital building open
24 for a vast array of medical and outpatient

1 surgical and doctor services indefinitely. The
2 only thing that would ever cause the closure of
3 our Rockton Avenue Campus hospital building is the
4 flooding contamination of the hospital building as
5 a result of Mayor McNamara continuing to refuse to
6 install a box culvert from our campus to Kent
7 Creek to remove the floodwater from the campus
8 that pours from 250 surrounding acres.

9 You may hear today that our certificate of
10 exemption for discontinuing our medical/surgical
11 beds is a step towards closing the Rockton Avenue
12 Hospital Campus, but nothing could be further from
13 the truth.

14 In 2021, we had 141,810 patient visits on
15 the Rockton Avenue Campus. This year, in 2022, we
16 project to have 141,619 visits, which is only 191
17 less patients after this exemption is issued. We
18 can easily care for these 191 inpatient visits at
19 our Riverside campus.

20 This Rockton Avenue Campus is vital to our
21 operations and together with the Riverside
22 facility makes one complete hospital with the
23 hospital-based outpatient services located in the
24 Rockton Avenue Hospital building.

1 Mercy desperately needs the Rockton Avenue
2 location to stay open, because we cannot offer all
3 of the hospital-based outpatient services at the
4 Riverside location. However, the constant risk of
5 severe flooding because of the Mayor's lack of
6 support is a looming threat that we need to keep
7 in mind as we evaluate appropriate levels of care
8 at both of our campus locations.

9 In the case of a flood, outpatients can
10 walk out of a hospital building, but it is
11 extremely difficult to remove seriously ill
12 inpatients that are in beds, many on ventilators,
13 to prevent these patients and beds from being
14 harmed by breathing in the dangerous contaminants
15 from the dirty sewer water flowing through the
16 heating ventilation and HVAC system.

17 Now, I'd like to turn the opening -- the
18 rest of the opening presentation over to Dr. John
19 Dorsey, our chief medical officer, to provide the
20 clinical portion of our opening presentation.

21 Thank you. Dr. Dorsey.

22 MS. SIMMONS: Mr. Dorsey, you're unmuted.
23 Please proceed.

24 DR. DORSEY: Thank you so very much.

1 Hi. My name is John Dorsey. J-O-H-N.
2 D-O-R-S-E-Y. And I'm the CMO of Mercy Health in
3 Rockford and speaking, obviously, in support of
4 this application. But I want to focus on the
5 clinical reasons behind the application.

6 So prior to the opening of our of
7 Riverside campus in -- which occurred in January
8 of '19, I spent many hours with my fellow
9 physicians determining the specific types of
10 patients that could be safely clinically treated
11 and managed at the Rockton Avenue Campus and which
12 patients had to be treated at Riverside.

13 It was always understood, both internally
14 and externally, that Riverside was the hospital
15 location for the sickest patients, as we had the
16 greater depth of services there. By that, I mean,
17 physical specialties and also the more extensive
18 state-of-the-art surgical and technological
19 capabilities.

20 For example, our cardiac interventional
21 labs are only on the Riverside campus. So we
22 planned, during those planning sessions, for those
23 patients needing hospital care but unlikely to
24 need advanced complex care to be hospitalized in

1 Rockton.

2 Well, despite these Riverside Hospital
3 preopening efforts, the operational realities were
4 much more complex. And it turned out patients'
5 clinical courses could not easily be predicted.
6 And as a result, we found ourselves frequently
7 having to transfer patients from the Rockton
8 Campus to the Riverside Campus if they wound up
9 needing more complex medical or technical skills.
10 And having to transfer these patients who are
11 getting sicker from one location to another was
12 obviously not good for patient care or for safety.

13 So as time progressed, physicians admitted
14 fewer and fewer patients to the Rockton Avenue
15 Hospital. And it has now gotten to the point
16 where the average number of patients admitted to
17 the Rockton Hospital is two to three. This is
18 clearly not the optimal way to deliver patient
19 care.

20 Please remember, we have never had two
21 complete hospitals. We only have one hospital
22 licensed between the two campuses, and, thus, it
23 is better patient care for Mercy Health to
24 consolidate its inpatients at the Riverside Campus

1 where there is, as I mentioned, that wide array of
2 specialty physicians and technical capabilities
3 and to consolidate its hospital-based and
4 clinic-based outpatient services on the Rockton
5 Hospital Campus.

6 Over the last few years, because of
7 factors that we all know, doctor shortages,
8 nursing shortages, folks leaving the health care
9 industry, COVID, market constraints, all health
10 care systems nationally have had to reanalyze what
11 services they can safely provide and in what
12 geographic locations in order to remain viable to
13 the larger community that they serve. Mercy
14 Health is no exception. Visions have to change to
15 meet reality.

16 Out of 200 hospitals in the state of
17 Illinois, Mercy Health historically had the second
18 largest amount of charity care and Medicaid
19 patient services, and our inpatient Medicaid
20 utilization reached 58 percent. This was
21 occurring simultaneously to the State's
22 implementation of managed Medicaid care
23 organizations or MCOs that delayed and refused to
24 pay services given to our patients.

1 In 2020, Mercy Health lost over
2 \$70 million at its Rockford hospital. Why?
3 Expenses exceeded revenues. No entity can sustain
4 itself if losses of this magnitude continue. I
5 think some people think that hospitals can't
6 close. Well, that's not true. In the last couple
7 years, three Chicago hospitals alone have closed
8 due to financial losses.

9 Did we have to change our vision and
10 operations to stay viable? Yes, we did. And I
11 would say now we have a clearer vision of the
12 long-term complementary nature of our one hospital
13 located on two campuses. Rockton campus will
14 focus on hospital-based outpatient services and
15 Riverside on inpatient.

16 As Mr. Bea said, the Rockton Hospital
17 building has many unique clinical services not
18 offered at any of our other Mercy Health
19 facilities. Such examples are included but not
20 limited to radiation oncology, medical oncology,
21 pain management, outpatient ORs, and our primary
22 endoscopy suites.

23 In addition, we have numerous clinical
24 services that will remain; family medicine, family

1 medicine residents, pediatrics, medical adult
2 subspecialties, cardiac and pulmonary rehab,
3 orthopedics, podiatry, and numerous others.

4 Well over 50 physicians will remain on the
5 Rockton Campus. And to repeat again, even after
6 the bed closures, we anticipate no net change in
7 the number of patients that we will be seeing
8 overall. With a decrease of 191 patients on
9 Rockton, those are the inpatients that will be
10 treated out of Riverside.

11 The Rockton Campus is critical for Mercy
12 Health. As Mr. Bea said, Riverside can't
13 accommodate the unique services just mentioned.
14 Really, Rockton and Riverside together make one
15 complete hospital, and that's why we have one
16 hospital license.

17 It's also important to know that there are
18 internal operational support services for Mercy
19 Health that are housed at Rockton that are vital
20 to our everyday operations. Our main laboratory
21 is in Rockton, our billing department and accounts
22 receivable is in Rockton, and there are many more
23 examples. These two campuses complement each
24 other.

1 From our perspective, any comments about
2 closing Rockton Avenue are unthinkable, especially
3 because of the clinical needs -- the unique
4 clinical needs and also after investing over
5 100 million in capital improvement. The only
6 thing that worries us about closing the Rockton
7 Hospital would be a future flooding.

8 Changing our 2015 vision of the Rockton
9 Hospital has been challenging, obviously, and
10 necessary. The alternative would have been
11 failure. Our 2022 vision reflects safe and
12 effective patient care, the realities of the
13 workforce, and fiscal sustainability.

14 Rockton will remain a vibrant and
15 necessary complement to Riverside as we continue
16 to serve the greater Rockford region. Thank you.

17 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you, Mr. Dorsey.
18 Next, we have Mayor McNamara. You are unmuted.
19 Yes. Please proceed.

20 MAYOR MCNAMARA: First, I want to say
21 thank you to the Illinois Health Facilities and
22 Services Board. I also want to say thank you to
23 the dedicated and compassionate Mercy Health
24 employees.

1 But we all knew this day was inevitable
2 when Mercy came to our community just seven years
3 ago. Despite his story about being dedicated to
4 the west side, Rockford -- being dedicated to the
5 west side of Rockford because he grew up here,
6 Javon Bea and the Mercy Health board could not
7 care less about our community. They only care
8 about profits and their bottom line. They have
9 said one thing and done another time and time
10 again.

11 In 2015, Javon said we are committed to
12 maintaining a North Rockton Avenue Campus
13 providing hospital-based services. In 2018, he
14 said abandonment wasn't an option because the
15 hospital's impact on the west side of Rockford.
16 However, in 2020, they closed the area's pediatric
17 intensive care unit and its mental health unit,
18 the units that care for our city's most vulnerable
19 residents. Also, in 2020, they reduced emergency
20 department services, which eliminated a
21 much-needed full-service ER for residents of our
22 west side.

23 Despite these closures, Javon declared
24 that the idea that we are trying to close the

1 Rockton Avenue Campus systematically is the
2 furthest thing from the truth. However, just a
3 month ago, we all learned that Mercy announced yet
4 another closure, that it would stop providing
5 inpatient medical and surgical services.

6 So not only is Javon Bea and the board
7 doing exactly what they kept telling us they
8 wouldn't do, they are actually doing it at the
9 worst time possible. We are in the middle of the
10 biggest surge of a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic.
11 Health care services are critical to ending this
12 pandemic, and they can't keep up.

13 But somehow Javon Bea and the board think
14 now is the right time to shut down inpatient
15 services to our residents most in need. They will
16 probably try to blame the pandemic for this
17 closure, but don't let them use two years of an
18 unprecedented community health crisis as an excuse
19 to put an irreplaceable hole in the care for our
20 most vulnerable patients in Rockford.

21 The Mercy board and this Board need to
22 stand up now and stand against putting profits
23 over people. It's never too late to do the right
24 thing. And I urge this Board to do the right

1 thing and keep this hospital open. Thank you.

2 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you, Mayor. Next,
3 let's go to Representative Maurice West.

4 REPRESENTATIVE WEST: Thank you so much.
5 Can you hear me?

6 MS. SIMMONS: Yes, we can. Thank you.

7 REPRESENTATIVE WEST: All right. Thank
8 you so much to the Board and to -- for putting on
9 this public hearing. I'm State Representative
10 Maurice West. M-A-U-R-I-C-E. W-E-S-T.

11 I'm the state representative of the 67th
12 District in Rockford, which is the whole west side
13 and south side of Rockford. I'm a proud resident
14 of Rockford, I'm a product of the Rockford public
15 schools, and I know of the history that has been
16 systemic in our city. The history of our
17 beautiful river essentially serving as a railroad
18 tracks. The east side is the haves, the west
19 sides is the have-nots.

20 One of my main missions as state
21 representative is to ensure that the west side and
22 the south side gets the same resources, the same
23 opportunities, as the east side of Rockford does.
24 Excellence everywhere for everyone. Opportunities

1 everywhere for everyone.

2 And so it's really hard to grasp that from
3 Javon Bea who says that he's from the west side of
4 town when all the services on the west side of
5 town are leaving. When Javon Bea and Mercy Health
6 showed a desire to come to Rockford and build a
7 hospital off of I-90, every Rockfordian was
8 concerned about what would happen to the west side
9 campus, and we were assured that the one and only
10 hospital on the west side will remain open and
11 provide crucial services, not just stay open, but
12 provide the crucial services as well.

13 Even in 2020, in a news story with WREX,
14 Javon Bea addressed rumors that he was getting
15 ready to close the Rockton Campus. He said,
16 quote, that's not true. He plans to keep the --
17 they quoted him saying he plans to keep the
18 hospital open indefinitely. However, he said,
19 there is one thing that could shut the hospital
20 down for good. Flooding.

21 Personally, I'm thinking that he meant
22 just water, floods from water. But his actions
23 over the past couple of years, in the middle of a
24 pandemic, show me that he also meant a flood of

1 Medicaid patients needing services will cause them
2 to drop Medicaid providers because it was
3 affecting their bottom line --

4 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

5 REPRESENTATIVE WEST: -- in the middle of
6 a pandemic or a flood of COVID patients from the
7 west side, which caused elective surgeries to take
8 a temporary back seat during this pandemic, and
9 that flood also affected their bottom line.

10 In spite of these actions from Javon Bea
11 Hospital, I secured millions of dollars from the
12 state for the hospital out of good faith, whatever
13 I needed to do to ensure that the Rockton campus
14 stayed open. Yet, here we are.

15 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

16 REPRESENTATIVE WEST: I'm almost done.

17 So the next question is, where do we go
18 from here? I'm imploring Mercy Health to do the
19 right thing and stand on what you've been telling
20 our community since day one.

21 Excellence everywhere for everyone means
22 that services that are on the east side needs to
23 be on the west side. Because as of right now, a
24 promise made is not a promise kept, and there's

1 still time to fix that.

2 Do not close Rockton Campus. Do not
3 accept the certificate of exemption. Thank you.

4 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you, Representative
5 West. Next, let's go to Representative Dave
6 Vella.

7 REPRESENTATIVE VELLA: Thank you. I am
8 Representative Dave Vella. I'm from the Rockford
9 68th, which is the east side of Rockford. And
10 I've lived in both sides of Rockford for my whole
11 life. I was born in the Rockford Rockton Campus.
12 My daughter was born in the Rockford Rockton
13 Campus. It is a historic hospital in a historic
14 neighborhood. And to close it right now would be
15 a horrible idea.

16 The Mercy Health Rockton Campus is a
17 critical asset to our residents on the west side
18 of Rockford. Leading up to today, this facility
19 has been gradually stripped away by the Javon Bea
20 group, paving the way for an eventual shut down of
21 the entire campus. I have constituents who have
22 lived in that area who live there now. If this
23 facility closes, their closest hospital would be
24 Swedish American, an extra mile away, which could

1 mean the difference between life and death for
2 them.

3 The Rockton facility has resources that
4 are so needed for our community, especially on the
5 west side; the orthopedics, oncology and
6 chemotherapy, radiology, gastroenterology, and a
7 helipad, these things are crucial things for the
8 west side of Rockford.

9 Rockford is, as my colleague, Maurice
10 West, stated, split into two. And to take this
11 away would disenfranchise the west side of
12 Rockford. The Rockford facility is a big employer
13 also for the region. If it were shut down, that
14 would put hundreds of people out of work. This
15 process they have already initiated as well by
16 laying off as many staff members as possible
17 during COVID. And to let anyone use COVID as a
18 reason for shutting down this much-needed
19 hospital, I think, would be criminal.

20 On Mercy Health's own website, they state,
21 Mercy Health is committed to providing exceptional
22 hospital care, no matter where you live,
23 throughout southern Wisconsin and northern
24 Illinois. By closing this facility and going back

1 on their commitment, they are actively going
2 against that mission.

3 Javon Bea has publicly stated time and
4 again that he would keep the Rockford facility
5 open, but his actions internally show steps taken
6 to gradually shut this facility down and moving
7 services to the Riverside Campus.

8 I urge this Board to not accept this. I
9 urge this Board to listen to my colleague, Maurice
10 West, and to Mayor McNamara and please keep this
11 open. Thank you very much.

12 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Next, I have
13 Senator Steve Stadelman. You're still muted, sir.

14 SENATOR STADELMAN: There we go. I got
15 all the buttons pushed now. Sorry about that.

16 MS. SIMMONS: That's okay.

17 SENATOR STADELMAN: I am State Senator
18 Steve Stadelman. Last name is spelled
19 S-T-A-D-E-L-M-A-N. I represent much of the
20 Rockford area, along with Loves Park and Machesney
21 Park. Thank you to the Board for the opportunity
22 to express the concerns of many in this community
23 about the planned closure of 70 inpatient surgical
24 beds at Mercy's Rockton Avenue Campus.

1 This is, as you've heard, one of several
2 reductions of services in a disadvantaged part of
3 town over the past several years. Unfortunately,
4 many in the community feel victim to what can best
5 be described as a bait-and-switch strategy at
6 retail stores. You're promised one thing, but it
7 turns out to be a much different product when you
8 get there.

9 A few years ago, when Mercy Health
10 officials asked the State for permission to build
11 a new hospital on the east side of town, there
12 were promises of two equal campuses and continued
13 inpatient and outpatient services at the Rockton
14 Campus.

15 Instead, as you heard, trauma services
16 were eliminated on the Rockton Campus at the start
17 of the pandemic in 2020. A 20-bed inpatient
18 mental health unit was also closed on the campus.
19 And in 2018, Mercy Health officials did say it was
20 important not to abandon the Rockton Campus
21 because of the hospital's impact on the west side
22 of Rockford. However, I fear, and many in that
23 part of the community fear, that's exactly what's
24 slowly been happening as inpatient services and

1 access to critical health care services continues
2 to go away on the west side of Rockford.

3 Thanks for the opportunity.

4 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Next, Mitch,
5 we're going to go to Joanna Benning.

6 MS. BENNING: Good afternoon. Thank you,
7 Board. And my name is Joanna Benning. I am vice
8 president of facilities and support services for
9 Mercy Health. I am speaking in support of this
10 application today.

11 As noted by Mr. Bea, Rockton is an
12 integral part of the services we offer in
13 Rockford. Because of this, we have invested more
14 than a million dollars into the campus over the
15 last six years. I have led and overseen every
16 single one of these projects.

17 We are needing to stay on the west side.
18 We are needing to stay on our Rockton Avenue
19 Campus. The hospital building is a beautiful
20 renovated facility. We have built a new
21 state-of-the-art cancer center, GI labs, upgraded
22 radiology capabilities, a new ortho suite, EMS
23 training centers, and much more.

24 The only thing, as noted, that would shut

1 this facility down is flooding that we have
2 already seen and occur from water rain events that
3 is increasing after more time and time again.
4 Following the 2018 flooding, we worked closely
5 with Fehr Graham, a Rockford-based engineering
6 firm. Fehr Graham is also the engineering firm
7 for the City of Rockford.

8 We need to focus and help the City and
9 Mayor McNamara help understand the criticalness to
10 install a box culvert to help us keep this
11 facility open. It's important to understand that
12 the City's sewer system has not changed since 1962
13 when much of the property around the campus was
14 not developed. What once was green space
15 surrounding the campus was paved over. The City
16 allowed 250 acres to be built surrounding the
17 Rockton Campus without upgrading the sewer system.

18 We need your help in getting the City to
19 implement this critical infrastructure to help us
20 save our campus from flooding that will occur.
21 Thank you.

22 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Next, we have
23 Alderman McNeely.

24 MR. MITCHELL: I do not see Linda McNeely

1 on our list of attendees. If she's calling in, if
2 she could please use star 3 to raise her hand.

3 MS. SIMMONS: Mitch, I'm hearing some
4 background. Do you see who's unmuted between
5 myself and you? I can't tell. Am I -- I may be
6 hearing something. Okay. Well, you don't see
7 Alderman McNeely? So let's go to Alderman --
8 Alderman Bonne.

9 MR. MITCHELL: Again, that name is not on
10 my list of attendees.

11 MS. SIMMONS: Okay.

12 MR. MITCHELL: If he is in attendance and
13 dialing or calling in on the phone, if he could
14 use star 3 to raise his hand and we will recognize
15 him. I do not see that -- anyone.

16 MS. SIMMONS: Alderman Wilkins. Do you
17 see --

18 MR. MITCHELL: Yes. Yes. I have Alderman
19 Wilkins.

20 MS. SIMMONS: Alderman Wilkins, you are
21 unmuted. Please proceed.

22 ALDERMAN WILKINS: Thank you. Thank you
23 guys for having me on today. There's clearly
24 something between the organization and the City of

1 Rockford and we all know that there has been
2 millions of dollars that has been invested into
3 this campus and (indiscernible) --

4 THE REPORTER: I'm sorry. I believe
5 you're freezing.

6 MR. MITCHELL: Alderman Wilkins, you are
7 freezing.

8 ALDERMAN WILKINS: I'm not sure. Can you
9 guys hear me okay now?

10 MS. SIMMONS: Yes.

11 ALDERMAN WILKINS: I don't know what you
12 heard or what you didn't hear.

13 MS. SIMMONS: Alderman Wilkins, your
14 connection is slightly bad. So let's do this,
15 let's go to the next one, and we'll come back to
16 you.

17 Okay. All right. Chief Pankow. Okay.
18 There she -- you are unmuted. Chief Pankow?

19 CHIEF PANKOW: Good afternoon. Thank you
20 to the Health Facilities and Services Review Board
21 for the opportunity to speak today.

22 My name is Michelle Pankow, and I am the
23 chief of the Rockford Fire Department. Our
24 department is the primary emergency medical

1 response and trained support agency for the City
2 of Rockford.

3 In 2015, our department began to assess
4 the impact that a new hospital on the far
5 northeast side of Rockford would have on both
6 operations for our department as well as the
7 community that we serve. At that time, Mercy
8 Health stated that a regional destination campus
9 would give us the economic strength allowing Mercy
10 Rockford to continue to invest \$50 million in
11 Rockton Avenue, allowing Mercy Rockton to continue
12 hospital services on the west side.

13 But since then, we have seen a systematic
14 reduction in services, not only at the Rockton
15 Avenue Campus but at the Riverside Campus as well,
16 most notably, the pediatric intensive care unit.
17 There are numerous concerns with the additional
18 requested reductions, as the patients living on
19 the west side are already forced to seek
20 time-sensitive care for critical conditions at
21 facilities on the far east side of Rockford.

22 Previous closures of the cath lab -- or
23 relocation of the cath -- the cardiac cath lab
24 affects treatment and early treatment for heart

1 attacks. Early treatment for stroke was
2 negatively impacted with the relocation of the
3 stroke team and then trauma intervention with the
4 reduction of trauma capabilities at the Rockton
5 facility.

6 As an agency, we've seen a negative impact
7 on ambulance out-of-service times. This impact
8 has been felt citywide, but it's most acute for
9 those on the northwest side of Rockford. With the
10 reduction in emergency services at the Rockton
11 Campus, our ambulances are forced to transport
12 critical patients to hospitals further away --

13 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

14 CHIEF PANKOW: -- these transports often
15 take two or even three times as long as a
16 transport to the Rockton Avenue Campus, and
17 ambulances returning from these other facilities
18 are out of service for a much longer period of
19 time --

20 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

21 CHIEF PANKOW: Just done -- almost done.
22 If services are further reduced, it will likely
23 create what we're looking at as a health care
24 desert on the west side of Rockford, and it will

1 have a direct impact on those in a one-mile radius
2 around the facility.

3 The population there has a higher portion
4 of persons living with disabilities, a greater
5 percentage of population over the age of 65, and a
6 significant number of households without access to
7 transportation. Further reduction in services at
8 the Rockton Campus will be felt citywide, but most
9 acutely by those who can afford to endure it the
10 least. Thank you.

11 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you, Chief Pankow.
12 Next, we have Mr. Todd Anderson.

13 MR. MORADO: Mr. Anderson is going to be
14 speaking from the conference room that's listed,
15 the Mercy Health conference room.

16 MR. MITCHELL: Okay. It's connected.

17 MS. SIMMONS: If you can please unmute
18 yourself, Mercy Health. There you go. You can
19 proceed.

20 MR. ANDERSON: Good afternoon. My name is
21 Todd Anderson, T-O-D-D, A-N-D-E-R-S-O-N, and I am
22 the vice president of finance for Mercy Health.

23 I feel it necessary to clarify a few key
24 facts so that you are aware of the investment in

1 community development that Mercy Health has and
2 continues to provide to our community.

3 You may have heard today that Mercy Health
4 does not support the community. This is not true.
5 Mercy Health has invested heavily in jobs. Over
6 the last six years, we have invested over
7 \$1,686,000,000 in jobs. These jobs positively
8 touch all areas of the Rockford community and
9 economy. They include entry-level positions such
10 as highly -- as well as highly skilled and trained
11 medical physicians, nurses, and clinicians. We
12 are one of the top employers in Rockford.

13 We also have the highest Medicaid
14 utilization in the region. Prior to the changes
15 we made due to the for-profit Medicaid Managed
16 Care Organizations, MCOs, not paying us, we were
17 58 percent Medicaid utilization, the second
18 highest in the state out of over 200 hospitals.
19 This is five times higher than OSF, and they
20 withdrew from the two largest for-profit Medicaid
21 MCOs, Meridian and Blue Cross Blue Shield, before
22 Mercy Health did. It's also over twice as large
23 as UW Swedish American.

24 Six years ago, Mercy Health in Rockford

1 had over 85 percent of our Medicaid patients tied
2 to the state directly, and the state reimbursed
3 Mercy Health better and did eventually pay patient
4 bills. At that time, less than 15 percent of our
5 Medicaid patients were on the for-profit MCOs that
6 not only pay 18 cents for a dollar cost of care,
7 but many don't pay it at all. And four years
8 later, we had 100 percent of our Medicaid patients
9 on these nonpaying MCOs. This is why we had to
10 make changes. Even with these changes, we are
11 losing money.

12 The MCOs often do not pay us at all. And
13 when they do, they pay at 82 cents less than one
14 dollar cost of care. The MCOs pay only 18 cents
15 on a dollar cost of care, and that is why we lose
16 so much money in Rockford. In Rockford, Mercy
17 Health lost \$73 million in 2020, lost \$43 million
18 in 2021, and we are on track again to lose over
19 \$40 million this year, 2020.

20 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

21 MR. ANDERSON: Under Mr. Bea's leadership,
22 Mercy Health has built Rockford a new \$500 million
23 state-of-the-art tertiary regional referral
24 center, invested over \$100 million on the Rockton

1 Avenue Campus, as you previously heard today,
2 built new beautiful clinics at various locations
3 in Rockford, such as Cherry Valley, north on
4 Alpine Avenue, and brought new family practice and
5 internal medicine doctor training programs,
6 training 75 new doctors for the Rockford area.

7 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

8 MR. ANDERSON: Since -- I'm almost done.

9 Since rumors are spread about Mr. Bea's
10 compensation, I will say the following points.
11 First, 80 percent of Mr. Bea's compensation is at
12 risk. If he does not achieve the goals the board
13 demands of him, then his compensation severely
14 drops. Mr. Bea has no involvement in setting his
15 compensation. It is set by the board.

16 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you, Mr. Anderson.
17 Thank you, Mr. Anderson. We're going to move on
18 to the next -- the next speaker. You know, I want
19 to -- Mitch, do you see Dorothy Reddick? I did
20 not see Dorothy Reddick.

21 MR. MITCHELL: No. She is not on the
22 list.

23 MS. SIMMONS: And she's not in as a
24 call-in user either? Do you get those

1 registrations?

2 MR. MITCHELL: No. I don't have any names
3 associated with the call-in users. She would need
4 to raise her hand with star 3.

5 MS. SIMMONS: Okay. All right. Well,
6 let's go back to Linda -- Alderman Linda McNeely.
7 I see we have a couple of hands raised. I'm
8 guessing that's either Alderman McNeely or
9 Alderman Bonne. No. We have Alderman -- so
10 Alderman McNeely.

11 MR. MITCHELL: I'm still not seeing them
12 on my list of attendees.

13 MS. SIMMONS: Let's go back to Alderman
14 Wilkins.

15 MR. MITCHELL: I also do not have her on
16 the list anymore. I believe she's probably
17 disconnected.

18 MS. SIMMONS: Okay. Well -- well, let's
19 go to the first hand that's raised. I see another
20 hand. Michael -- is that Michael Dillard? It's
21 not coming in on mine.

22 MR. DILLARD: Hello?

23 MS. SIMMONS: You're unmuted.

24 MR. DILLARD: Yes, ma'am. My name is

1 Michael Dillard. D-I-L-L-A-R-D. I'm a resident
2 from the west side of Rockford, Illinois. And I
3 was just calling to voice some of my concerns and
4 comment on some of the things I've heard.

5 The first thing I'm going to talk about is
6 Mercy Health just put on a hell of a dog and pony
7 show. If they're going to provide integral --
8 capitalize integral, that word, to the citizens of
9 Rockford, why are they continuing to remove
10 services?

11 They've got an emergency room that is
12 staffed with only nurses with an on-call doctor.
13 That could contribute to life or death. If I'm an
14 EMT, I've got to make a decision where I'm going
15 to take my patient.

16 So by stripping away all these services,
17 you're actually accelerating the demise of the
18 hospital. These people must be held accountable.
19 I mean, they're talking about Medicare and
20 Medicaid. At the end of the year, they get all
21 that money back. They're talking about losses
22 within the year. The logistics just don't work.
23 Cutting services are just not acceptable. Swede's
24 emergency room looks like a war room because the

1 EMTs, as brave and as talented as they are, got to
2 make a decision where they're going to take a
3 patient.

4 And, you know, it's just -- it's just not
5 acceptable. The west side is already underserved,
6 very underserved, and we do not need this. We
7 need a fully-staffed emergency room. You know,
8 this is where a lot of violence happens on the
9 west side. We have a lot of shootings. We have a
10 lot of trauma over here. They have it on the east
11 side too, but it's more so on the west.

12 And they've taken away an integral
13 component of emergency care. And I just think
14 that's despicable. And like Mr. McNamara said,
15 our mayor, everything Javon Bea has said he was
16 going to do, he didn't do.

17 You know, so -- and that's all I have to
18 say. And I thank you for allowing me the
19 opportunity to speak.

20 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Next --

21 MR. MITCHELL: April, I believe we may
22 have Janessa Wilkins back. Let me check. Just a
23 moment. Is this Alderman Wilkins?

24 ALDERMAN WILKINS: It is. I just put it

1 in the Q and A that I dialed in on my phone to see
2 if that would help with the connection, but can
3 you guys hear me okay now?

4 MS. SIMMONS: We can. Please proceed.

5 ALDERMAN WILKINS: Thank you. And thank
6 you for having me on. And thank you guys for
7 taking the time to meet with us all for this
8 hearing today.

9 I know this pretty much boils down to
10 money. You know, the hospital has put in money
11 for the facility, the City has put in money for
12 the facility. And what we all do know is that
13 it's in a bad spot for the flooding. And so as
14 Mr. Bea stated earlier, it's not a matter of if it
15 will flood again but when.

16 And it's not only the hospital that's
17 suffering, but it's also the residents around the
18 hospital that's suffering as well. I can't go
19 back and we can't change anything that happened in
20 the past, but I would like to see what we can do
21 to move forward. I think we can -- most of us
22 agree that, you know, the facility on Riverside,
23 while we are grateful that, you know, you guys do
24 still have services available for the residents of

1 the Rockford area, we need services on the west
2 side as well.

3 And even if you don't live over here, you
4 may be passing through here. Someone you may
5 know, someone in your family may be over here and
6 they may need those facilities and those critical
7 couple minutes that might be -- excuse me -- might
8 work into the situation could affect you in ways
9 that you don't even comprehend right now.

10 So what I would like to do -- and, moving
11 forward, if anyone is willing to sit down with me
12 and we can talk about how we can move forward,
13 whether that involves moving the campus to a spot
14 that makes sense over here on the west end, if we
15 need to utilize the facility for mixed services to
16 raise money until we're able to get that facility,
17 I'm all ears.

18 I understand you guys have had
19 conversations with the Mayor and other individuals
20 before. You have not with me. And so if we could
21 explore all possible opportunities, I am here for
22 it, and I am more than willing to take some time
23 out of my day and sit down and see how we can move
24 forward in getting the residents something that

1 they need over here on the west side. Thank you.

2 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Karl Franzen.

3 MR. MITCHELL: He is unmuted. Sorry. And
4 now he's unmuted. Sorry.

5 MR. FRANZEN: Thank you. I am Karl
6 Franzen. K-A-R-L. F-R-A-N-Z-E-N. I'm the
7 director of community and economic development for
8 the City of Rockford. In my role, I leverage
9 economic development tools, including agreements
10 for developments that can enhance the community,
11 provide equitable economic opportunity, and
12 benefit the public.

13 The City entered a development agreement,
14 which included significant public financial
15 support with Mercy contemplating the construction
16 of the Riverside Campus so that Rockford residents
17 would benefit from the new facility, including
18 related commercial development, as well as ensure
19 the Rockton facility remained an asset for the
20 neighborhood, both in terms of services provided
21 and viability of nearby businesses.

22 Mercy has not met much of the intent and
23 specific terms of the agreement. The impact of
24 transferring services to Riverside has been

1 staggering for Rockton Avenue. Data from the
2 analytic firm Placer indicates visits, including
3 employees, patients, families, vendors to the
4 Rockton Campus fell 51 percent once critical
5 services and employees transferred to Riverside
6 and steadily declined from all there to now, just
7 23 percent of pre-2019 levels.

8 This activity decline correlates with
9 closures of essential commercial services like the
10 Rockton Avenue Schnuck's grocery store, which
11 closed just before Riverside opened. Contrastly,
12 during and despite the pandemic, Riverside visits
13 increased.

14 The development agreement has provisions
15 to maintain and invest in Rockton Avenue. Section
16 9(C), Mercy commits to maintaining operations at
17 the Rockton Campus and establishing an advisory
18 board for the repurposing of the clinic building
19 to include the Mayor, community leaders, and Mercy
20 representatives. This has not occurred.

21 Also of note, the agreement has provisions
22 to ensure that Rockford residents benefitted from
23 the services and tax dollars from commercial
24 development adjacent to the Riverside facility.

1 Sections 4(C) and (D) commit Mercy to commercial
2 development on at least 60 acres and commencing
3 development of a hotel by September 2020. No
4 development has occurred, and Mercy has repeatedly
5 rejected referrals I have sent from developers
6 interested in a hotel and other commercial
7 activity at the site.

8 Approval of the applicant's request is
9 inconsistent with their agreement with the City
10 and not in the interest of the City of Rockford.
11 Thank you.

12 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Maryanne Miller.

13 DR. MILLER: Hello. Good afternoon. My
14 name is Dr. Maryanne Miller. M-A-R-Y-A-N-N-E.
15 Miller. M-I-L-L-E-R. And I'm the head
16 hospitalist and current president of the medical
17 staff at Mercy Health. I'm speaking in support of
18 Mercy Health's proposals.

19 As you've heard from Dr. Dorsey, staffing
20 for inpatient services for two Rockford hospitals
21 is simply not efficient or comprehensive,
22 especially now with the growing shortage of health
23 care workers. Staffing units at two hospitals
24 requires ample hospitalists, nurses, and support

1 staff and is not viable with the current patient
2 volumes at the Rockton campus.

3 Because so much can be done on an
4 outpatient basis now, only the sickest of the sick
5 get admitted to the hospital these days. When
6 they do, they often require subspecialty services
7 from more advanced providers. The availability of
8 subspecialty physicians remains both a local and a
9 national issue with significant shortages in
10 multiple fields. We spend months and years
11 recruiting for these providers, as they remain a
12 scarce resource and are not always readily
13 available.

14 We have been fortunate to add critical,
15 necessary, and specialized support in recent
16 years, including neurointerventional, gynecologic
17 oncology, and interventional radiology physicians
18 that provide excellent and advanced care to our
19 patients. These services, however, cannot be
20 readily duplicated at two campuses.

21 Inpatient services at the Rockton Campus
22 have become inconvenient to the patients because
23 they often end up requiring the specialized
24 services offered at the Riverside Campus. Often,

1 we admit them here, but we have to transfer them
2 there, because we do not have the subspecialty
3 support here at the Rockton Campus, nor can we
4 provide that service because of the lack of
5 providers.

6 In addition to the patient satisfaction
7 concerns, teams need to assemble each day to
8 determine which patients need the extra cares.
9 These meetings can be lengthy, and then that time
10 can be used by all staff to provide necessary and
11 invaluable patient care.

12 By consolidating inpatient care to the
13 Riverside Campus, we are better able to utilize
14 our existing staff, thus, allowing us to provide
15 better and complete patient care. Thank you.

16 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Anquette
17 Parham.

18 MS. PARHAM: Good afternoon. My name is
19 Anquette Parham. A-N-Q-U-N-E-T-T-E.
20 P-A-R-H-A-M. I'm the executive director of health
21 and human services for the City of Rockford. My
22 role includes leading the City's programmatic
23 efforts towards -- geared towards the most
24 vulnerable residents of our city, so that includes

1 children in head start all the way up to adults
2 experiencing homelessness and those in crisis.

3 Please know that the steady decline and
4 reduction in services provided at the Rockton
5 Avenue location and now this stated plan of
6 consolidation of inpatient services on the
7 Riverside Campus and of outpatient services at the
8 Rockton Campus is not what was promised to this
9 community nor this Board at the time of Mercy's
10 certificate of need application to build their
11 Riverside Campus.

12 Closure of this location is detrimental to
13 the entire Rockford community and, most
14 specifically, the west side. Decreased access to
15 care will continue to make it more difficult to
16 adequately address the social determinants of
17 health in this community and improved health
18 outcomes for all of Rockford.

19 The closure of this hospital location will
20 also continue to add additional stressors on the
21 City's other health care partners that continue to
22 serve all of Rockford. Other health care
23 organizations have dug in and expanded their
24 footprints in underserved areas of our community

1 at this most critical time in the midst of a
2 global pandemic.

3 This current picture of one hospital and
4 two locations does not look like the one promised
5 to residents, patients, taxpayers, and Rockford's
6 elected officials not too long ago. I urge the
7 Health Care Facilities and Services Review Board
8 to reject Mercy's request for exemption, stop the
9 bait and switch that's in progress, and stand up
10 for the residents and taxpayers of Rockford,
11 Illinois who have been misled throughout this
12 process. Rockford deserves better. Thank you
13 very much.

14 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Let's go to
15 Valeri DeCastris.

16 MS. DECASTRIS: Hello. Can you hear me?

17 MS. SIMMONS: Yes.

18 MS. DECASTRIS: Hi. I've had my hand up,
19 because I don't understand why I can't see
20 everyone. Just two people. So sorry about the
21 video.

22 My name is Valeri DeCastris. V-A-L-E-R-I.
23 Last name, D-E-C-A-S-T-R-I-S.

24 I'm here today as the president of the

1 Ethnic Village Neighborhood Association in the
2 southwest quadrant of Rockford, the oldest, most
3 historic district of Rockford. I also am a former
4 scientist with the Illinois Department of Public
5 Health and was a private sector environmental
6 consultant to Rockford Memorial Hospital sampling
7 and analyzing and advising on their wastewater
8 treatment system. So I am somewhat acquainted
9 with the water quality issues there, however,
10 there was no flooding, to my knowledge, when I was
11 involved in 2000 to 2005.

12 I moved to Rockford from Springfield and
13 chose to restore a neighborhood and my ancestral
14 home from 1923. We've been very successful in
15 doing both. However, the reason I moved to the
16 neighborhood was because I was appalled at how the
17 west side of Rockford has systematically been
18 disenfranchised. And leaving for college in the
19 1970s to Southern Illinois University where I got
20 my bachelor's and master's degrees in the sciences
21 and coming back in the mid '90s was quite a wake
22 up.

23 I had visited throughout the years and
24 watched business by business, service by service,

1 leave the west side. And, finally, there has been
2 reinvestment in the south and west quadrants.

3 However, we were concerned. Then Alderman Venita
4 Hervey, who was my alderman then, expressed
5 disdain for the removal of the level I trauma
6 center from the Rockton campus --

7 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

8 MS. DECASTRIS: -- I've seen numerous
9 doctors leave there as well as services. And this
10 would be horrific to continue to discriminate
11 against the west side residents who need not only
12 a level I trauma center but all the services that
13 they can get there.

14 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

15 Ms. DECASTRIS: Thank you very much.

16 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Patricia Lewis.
17 Mitch, do you see Patricia Lewis.

18 MS. LEWIS: I think -- am I unmuted? Can
19 you hear me?

20 MS. SIMMONS: Yes, we can. Please
21 proceed.

22 MS. LEWIS: Okay. Thank you. My name is
23 Patricia Lewis. P-A-T-R-I-C-I-A. L-E-W-I-S. I'm
24 a nurse with a clinical specialty in public health

1 and I'm vice president of the Winnebago County
2 Board of Health. I'm representing the board, and
3 I would like to express our concern about the
4 proposal to further diminish services at -- sorry
5 -- at Javon Bea Hospital on Rockton Avenue.

6 Two of the essential functions of public
7 health are assessment and assurance. Our health
8 department is charged with monitoring the health
9 status of our county and working with community
10 partners to assure adequate and accessible
11 resources for meeting the needs of our citizens.
12 We oppose the discontinuation of the
13 medical/surgical category of service on Rockton
14 Avenue.

15 We realize that the current inventory of
16 hospital beds in our planning area indicates a
17 surplus of beds, but the location of these beds in
18 the planning area needs to be taken into
19 consideration. Javon Bea Rockton is
20 geographically located on the west side. And as
21 you've heard from other speakers, the west side
22 has suffered from economic disinvestment and aging
23 infrastructure. This part of the city is home to
24 communities of color who have suffered

1 disproportionately the consequences of health
2 inequity, and the closure of beds at Javon Bea
3 Rockton places this part of our community at
4 increased risk for poor health outcomes.

5 In 2015, we supported Javon Bea Mercy
6 Health in its application to build a new facility
7 located northeast of the city with the
8 understanding and commitment from leadership
9 people at Mercy and Mercy board members that
10 services would continue to be provided along with
11 expansion and enhancements to Javon Bea Rockton
12 Avenue.

13 Since 2015, you've heard about the pattern
14 of closures and discontinuation of services that
15 that site has experienced. The current
16 application proposing that the Rockton Avenue site
17 function primarily as an outpatient site does not
18 provide the high quality and high acuity inpatient
19 access that the west side requires.

20 Generations of families in Rockford and
21 Winnebago County supported the growth of a
22 not-for-profit community hospital on the west side
23 of Rockford --

24 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

1 MS. LEWIS: -- the community deserves a
2 voice in decisions to discontinue and/or relocate
3 services since Javon Bea continues to hold a
4 tax-exempt status. Moving services to the far
5 east border of our county does not serve the
6 purpose of accessible and appropriate services for
7 the people of our community. Thank you.

8 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Matthew Johnson.

9 REV. JOHNSON: Yeah. You can hear me?

10 MS. SIMMONS: Yes, we can. Please
11 proceed.

12 REV. JOHNSON: I'm the Reverend
13 Dr. Matthew Johnson. M-A-T-T-H-E-W.
14 J-O-H-N-S-O-N.

15 I'm the senior minister of the Unitarian
16 Universality Church here in Rockford, and I spoke
17 in 2015 against the permit for Mercy Health to
18 build on the northeast side, concerned that they
19 would close, over time, the location on Rockton
20 Avenue, which serves a community that needs
21 quality, accessible, timely health care.

22 And I was told that, oh, no, no, Javon Bea
23 has the best interests of the west side at heart,
24 and he would never close down the emergency room

1 and the hospital on the west side, and I said I
2 don't trust -- I don't trust it. And people said,
3 no, no, no, you can trust. Well, five years --
4 six, seven years later, I notice that the only
5 people speaking in favor are employees of Mercy
6 because now we all know who is trustworthy and who
7 is not.

8 This should not be allowed to be continued
9 to be shut down step by step. In my role as a
10 minister, I visit members of my congregation who
11 are in the hospital. The facility on Riverside is
12 lovely. And I go to the facility on Rockton,
13 which used to be very nice and well-staffed, and
14 it's a ghost town over there. The quality of care
15 is not nearly as good. And the disinvestment is a
16 snowball that continues and continues.

17 Many of my people who go there are
18 residents of Wesley Willows, which contains many
19 senior citizens in our citizens -- in our
20 community, and they're very close there to the
21 Rockton campus but now go much further.

22 And people like to visit their family when
23 they're in the hospital. And when they're all the
24 way on the other side of town -- and,

1 unfortunately, the public transit isn't super
2 timely to get all the way over there -- that means
3 those patients don't get visits from loved ones,
4 from their clergy, from people who care about
5 them, which is important to their health if
6 they're in the hospital overnight, if this is
7 approved.

8 I will also note that this boxed culvert
9 that's being talked about, which seems, to me, a
10 distraction, the full amount is less than the
11 annual salary of the chairman of Mercy Health,
12 which is the highest salary for a nonprofit health
13 system in the country, which is obscene. It is
14 supposed to be a nonprofit, and someone is making
15 a profit. And it isn't the citizens of the west
16 side of Rockford.

17 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

18 REV. JOHNSON: There's been complaints
19 that we're running out of staff for this, but I
20 know that I talked to a lot of folks who work --
21 used to work in Mercy and the reason that Mercy is
22 losing staff more than the other systems, they
23 don't treat their people very well. And they
24 don't treat the people of the west side very well.

1 This Board should deny this permit and
2 reverse the attempted closure of this hospital.
3 And do not trust the words that you hear from the
4 people that work for Mr. Bea. Thank you.

5 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Nikki McIntosh.

6 MS. MCINTOSH: Hi. My name is Nikki
7 McIntosh. I am the senior director, chief nursing
8 officer for Javon Bea Hospital, and I am speaking
9 in support of Mercy Health's application.

10 Like Dr. Miller pointed out, during these
11 times, only the sickest of the sickest patients
12 are getting admitted to the hospital these days
13 and they need a number of specialty doctors to
14 care for them. As a CNO, from a nurse's point of
15 view, when there aren't the right specialists to
16 care for these patients and they need to be
17 transferred, it creates a huge burden for our
18 nurses.

19 Given the current health care climate,
20 it's unrealistic to fully staff both hospital
21 campuses. Patients are better served when
22 inpatient care is at one facility where all the
23 specialists and advanced technology are readily
24 available.

1 As you all know, businesses across the
2 county are facing severe nursing shortages as well
3 as other health care shortages right now, and
4 Mercy Health is no different.

5 We don't have adequate staff to keep all
6 of our facilities running at 100 percent. In
7 fact, we're not even close to 100 percent. We're
8 short-staffed across the board, and COVID is
9 making it so much worse. Despite our best efforts
10 every day, we have hundreds of employees out
11 across the system because of COVID. We've also
12 had to cut hours at our urgent cares and other
13 departments because we simply just don't have a
14 staff to run them.

15 We've had to take a long, hard look at our
16 operations. We've evaluated our patients' needs
17 and how they're utilizing our facilities to make
18 the best possible decisions about the use of our
19 staff while we continue to provide the very
20 safest, highest quality care.

21 As Dr. Dorsey pointed out, Rockton is
22 licensed for 74 medical/surgical beds but averages
23 only two inpatients a day. It really just is not
24 feasible to run a 24/7 inpatient unit on Rockton

1 when the census is just two patients, especially
2 when we're so short-staffed.

3 As Mr. Bea stated in his opening
4 statement, the difference in patients that were
5 treated last year compared to this year at our
6 Rockton Campus is only 191 less patients. And
7 these patients can easily be cared for at our
8 Riverside campus. Our proposal allows us to still
9 be able to care for the same number of people in
10 Rockford with no job loss, and it also allows us
11 the ability to utilize our staff in the best
12 possible way. Thank you.

13 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Next, we have
14 Matthew Smetana. S-M-E-T-A-N-A.

15 DR. SMETANA: Good afternoon. My name is
16 Dr. Matthew Smetana, and I'm an emergency
17 physician and the EMS medical director here at
18 Mercy Health in Rockford.

19 While I understand the emergency
20 department is not part of this certificate, I
21 would like to correct some of the
22 misunderstandings surrounding the Rockton
23 Emergency Department. We're currently -- we're
24 continuously evaluating the care provided at our

1 emergency departments.

2 Recently, we have noted that the vast
3 number of patients coming to the Rockton Emergency
4 Department do not require admission to a hospital
5 and could have alternatively been treated at an
6 urgent care or even their primary care physician's
7 office. Those patients requiring emergency care
8 will continue to be treated at our Riverside
9 Campus.

10 Similar to what others have said, it's
11 safer and more efficient for patients to have
12 access to all the specialty services available to
13 them at our Riverside location for emergency care.

14 I think it's also important to note that
15 Rockford's approximately 147,000 residents
16 currently have four emergency departments and
17 three trauma centers available to them. In
18 comparison, the combined population of nearby
19 Crystal Lake, Cary, Algonquin area is roughly
20 90,000, and, currently, they don't have a single
21 emergency department or trauma center. Rockford
22 has more options for emergency care, given its
23 population size, than many other areas in the
24 state.

1 Finally, Mercy Health is committed to the
2 training and education of first responders in our
3 region. We have highly skilled EMTs and
4 paramedics in this area who are supported by the
5 MD-1 emergency response program. Our MD-1
6 physicians respond with our prehospital colleagues
7 to bring hospital level care to the scene of a
8 patient's emergency. The MD-1 vehicle is equipped
9 with lifesaving medical equipment, and the MD-1
10 doctors work alongside local first responders to
11 stabilize patients prior to transfer to an
12 emergency department.

13 Basically, we're bringing hospital level
14 care directly to the scene of an accident or
15 medical emergency in order to improve outcomes
16 and, in many instances, save lives. This service
17 further enhances the emergency care available to
18 the Rockford area. Thanks.

19 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Mr. Edward
20 Kopeland.

21 MR. KOPELAND: Thank you. My name is K.
22 Edward Kopeland. Kopeland is K-O-P-E-L-A-N-D.
23 I'm pastor at New Zion Baptist Church on the west
24 side of Rockford, Illinois.

1 I've been here for 20 years. I was there
2 in 2005 when promises were made. I spoke out
3 against the permit being offered to the Mercy
4 Health Hospital System, because I could foresee
5 this very thing happening, and that is -- not to
6 relitigate everything that's already been said,
7 but this issue of access, location, and a lack of
8 transportation here in the City of Rockford.

9 In my view, this is the worst possible
10 time to take one of the most needed services from
11 the people who need them the most, because, in
12 Rockford, we don't live in a vacuum. The Rockton
13 Campus, the very location of it, speaks to not
14 only being an anchor in the community, but more so
15 to the issue of access given the lack of
16 transportation in this city.

17 Comparisons to other communities are
18 really irrelevant because Rockford has a high
19 incidence, particularly, on the west side, of
20 certain types of trauma, which is why Rockford
21 Memorial -- pardon me -- Mercy Health has been so
22 important in that neighborhood. And at the same
23 time, Rockford does not have the type of
24 transportation that a lot of other communities

1 have.

2 So I would just urge the -- the Board to
3 reject this plan to closing, because it is part of
4 a pattern that we've been watching over the last
5 seven years of just continued excuses for
6 disinvestment. You've heard directly from Mr. Bea
7 that the real problem is that the Mayor won't come
8 up with \$6 million, but, hey, we've put in over
9 \$100 million and for some reason didn't do due
10 diligence as it relates to the flooding issue in
11 the area.

12 We've heard other appeals to just the fact
13 that somehow or another, it really doesn't matter
14 because we're going to be seeing the same number
15 of people. But that doesn't speak to the issue of
16 access to those who need it most for the most
17 traumatic traumas as well as the fact that
18 transportation is a real issue here in Rockford,
19 as was highlighted by the chief of the fire
20 department. So --

21 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

22 MR. KOPELAND: -- for all those reasons, I
23 would urge you to please reject this current
24 application to close down those services. Thank

1 you.

2 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Judy Moe.

3 MS. MOE: Hello. My name is Judy Moe.
4 J-U-D-Y. M-O-E. And I'm speaking as a typical
5 patient and citizen of Rockford for over 40 years,
6 more than half of that time on the west side. So
7 I used Rockton Mercy or Rockford Memorial, as we
8 knew it, for all of my -- my and my family's
9 medical needs, including the birth of our daughter
10 and granddaughter and several surgeries, etc. It
11 was always a busy place, and it was usually hard
12 to find a parking place.

13 Since Mr. Bea took over, it has become
14 like a graveyard. Many of my doctors have been
15 moved to the east side clinics or have left town.
16 I've had six different oncologists in the last 11
17 years dealing with my cancer because they just
18 keep mysteriously moving on.

19 The most concerning situation to me was
20 when, at the end of 2020, I received a letter from
21 my neurologist office that they were closing that
22 department that deals with memory issues, and I
23 would have to go to Barrington, Illinois to find a
24 new doctor. Can you imagine all the memory,

1 dementia, and Alzheimer's patients having to
2 navigate that situation?

3 And, also, think about the fact that these
4 are people who are using Medicaid and Medicare
5 quite often. They are our older, more vulnerable
6 community. The letter said that I could call my
7 primary doctor for help in locating a new doctor.
8 When I called their office, they became very
9 distressed, because they had not even heard
10 anything about this department closing. No
11 warning at all. They eventually found me a doctor
12 at OSF, which is helping me. Thank God.

13 Since then, I have heard from many medical
14 people how upset they are with Mr. Bea and how he
15 continues to take services away from the west
16 side. He certainly has not kept his promise to
17 keep the Rockton Hospital available to meet the
18 needs of the people on that side of town. How
19 will we keep good medical people in Rockford when
20 they're treated in this way?

21 Thank you for letting me speak.

22 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Litesa Wallace.

23 MS. WALLACE: Good afternoon. Can
24 everyone hear me?

1 MS. SIMMONS: Yes, we can. Thank you.

2 MS. WALLACE: Thank you. Good afternoon.

3 I am former state representative Litesa Wallace.

4 That is spelled L-I-T-E-S-A, W-A-L-L-A-C-E.

5 And before we begin, I want to state my
6 fundamental position, which is that health care is
7 a fundamental right. Your right to decent health
8 care should not depend on your ZIP code or where
9 you live.

10 I've been involved in the issues related
11 to Mercy Health Systems for almost seven years.
12 In the late summer of 2015 in my role as state
13 representative, I was asked to take part in a
14 meeting with Mercy Health Systems to discuss the
15 possibility of one hospital, two campuses.

16 During that time -- during that meeting, I
17 was asked to support this expansion, which was
18 described as an opportunity to maintain services
19 on Rockford's west side and to expand the health
20 center's patient base throughout the region.

21 I heard a lot of promises. The community
22 heard a lot of promises. But as these plans
23 advanced, people in the surrounding neighborhood
24 began raising opposition to the project. And in

1 response, the CEO threatened to close the hospital
2 and whittle its services down to an urgent care
3 center if the two campus proposal was not
4 approved.

5 I was horrified that this hospital system
6 would play with people's lives and their health in
7 this way. But given that the health system was
8 one of the largest employers in my former
9 district, I reluctantly supported the plan for one
10 hospital, two campuses.

11 But it was apparent to me even then that
12 the hospital system's promises could be hollow.
13 So to protect the people on Rockford's west side
14 and people across Illinois whose health care might
15 be threatened by a badly managed or heartless
16 system, I introduced and passed House Bill 4964 in
17 the Illinois General Assembly to amend the
18 Illinois Health Facilities Planning Act with the
19 support of my colleague, Senator Steve Stadelman.

20 That amendment is the reason why we have
21 this legally-mandated opportunity today in a place
22 that is close to us, barring -- even if there was
23 no COVID and we were on Zoom, we would have to
24 have this hearing in the neighborhood in which

1 these changes were being proposed.

2 And this is an opportunity for the public
3 to speak out about this proposal to shut the door
4 of accessibility to inpatients.

5 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

6 MS. WALLACE: Thank you. And to provide
7 comprehensive health care for people on the west
8 side of Rockford and Winnebago County.

9 I oppose this proposal which threatens the
10 health and the well-being of thousands of people
11 in Rockford and beyond. And I do ask that we
12 decide what is really the issue. Is it the
13 staffing -- the viability of staffing? Is it the
14 flooding, which is not noted in the application?
15 And will we please center the 191 patients that we
16 say are fewer that will be served at Riverside and
17 think about their families as well.

18 Thank you for the opportunity to be here
19 today. Again, I oppose this application.

20 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Kara Sankey.

21 S-A-N-K-E-Y.

22 MR. MITCHELL: She's unmuted.

23 MS. SANKEY: Can you hear me now?

24 MS. SIMMONS: Yes, we can. Please

1 proceed.

2 MS. SANKEY: Okay. My name is Kara
3 Sankey, S-A-N-K-E-Y, and I serve as the vice
4 president of operations and the system chief
5 nursing officer for Mercy Health System.

6 My comment today is really that health
7 care today is dynamic. Regulations change,
8 treatments change, providers come and go, and the
9 needs of the community are always changing. As
10 Mercy Health and care providers, we are committed
11 to providing care to our patients the best way we
12 know how.

13 Obviously, being able to provide specialty
14 care in many locations would be ideal, but not a
15 reality in today's health care market, compounded
16 by a challenging labor market and poor
17 reimbursement, as you heard.

18 In reference to the comments on Mercy
19 doing this during a pandemic, I think it is
20 important to highlight that Mercy has added
21 services and adjusted their work continuously to
22 meet the needs of their community and their
23 patients during this pandemic. Like many other
24 health care organizations in this country, Mercy

1 Health has held vaccine clinics, antibody
2 infusions, testing centers. This means that we
3 need to pull staff from one location to another to
4 serve our patients.

5 Mercy Health also serves as the regional
6 hospital coordination -- coordinating center for
7 region one in Illinois. As the RHCC coordinator,
8 we recently partnered with IDPH to open up a
9 regional decompression unit in collaboration with
10 the Federal Disaster Medical Services System to
11 decompress patients not only from the region but
12 also the state.

13 I also want to make comment to access to
14 care. Access to health care is also a spectrum.
15 It -- it's utilization of hospital, but it's also
16 access to primary care, urgent care, therapies,
17 other services besides just the hospital.

18 And understanding that hospital is a key
19 service, access is much bigger than that. And
20 being able to put patients in the appropriate
21 level of care the first time is important for
22 patients so they're not pushed through a health
23 system.

24 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

1 MS. SANKEY: Okay. I'm done.

2 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Mitch, do you
3 see the first call-in user with the hand raised?

4 MR. MITCHELL: Yes.

5 MS. SIMMONS: Call-in user 19. Can you
6 unmute. You are unmuted.

7 MS. BOWEN: Hello, everyone. My name is
8 Precious Bowen, and I am a community member of
9 Rockford, born and raised. I was born at Rockford
10 Memorial, had all my kids at Rockford Memorial.
11 They were a strong pillar in the community and had
12 excellent services.

13 I'm not a politician. I am, however, a
14 registered nurse. I've been in health care 27
15 years. I hear a lot of talk, work with a lot of
16 nurses that used to work at Rockford Memorial and
17 left because they did not like the politics that
18 Mercy Health Systems brought into the City of
19 Rockford.

20 That being said, I heard on this call the
21 financial person mention that Mercy stands to lose
22 \$40 million this year. And I want to ask everyone
23 on that call, is \$40 million worth the lives of
24 people on the west side?

1 I watch -- literally watch -- ambulances
2 drive past the Rockton unit to turn on Riverside
3 to head down to that Riverside Campus. And I
4 often think to myself, wow, are they bypassing the
5 former Rockford Memorial Hospital to literally
6 drive all the way out to that Riverside Campus for
7 services for health care? That's not fair.
8 That's not fair. And it is not right.

9 My mother is 74 years old, and she lives
10 behind Auburn High School. So instead of
11 considering the dollars and cents, consider the
12 people. Lives can be lost. And this is not fair
13 to the community.

14 I don't know Javon Bea. But I know he
15 thinks very highly of himself, because he has his
16 names on both of these buildings. And I really
17 wish -- I really wish this community, this board,
18 would consider denying terminating the services at
19 that Rockton Campus.

20 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

21 MS. BOWEN: That is not where we need to
22 go. And instead of talking about staffing
23 shortages, why don't you consider opening up
24 another nursing program. Rockford Memorial used

1 to house a nursing program. Why don't you get in
2 the community and start talking to these high
3 school students about the importance of health
4 care and try to grow the health care profession
5 instead of complaining that you don't have enough
6 nurses or health care personnel to run two
7 campuses? Do something about that.

8 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

9 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. You know, I'm
10 going to ask everyone's patience. We have quite a
11 few people that would like to speak. And I know
12 that this is set from 1:00 to 3:00, but understand
13 that we -- everyone will have an opportunity to
14 speak if we have to go over that time frame. So
15 please be patient, and we will get to you. Next
16 on -- let's go to Harlan Johnson.

17 MR. MITCHELL: You can proceed.

18 MS. SIMMONS: Mr. Johnson, you are
19 unmuted. We cannot hear you. We will come back
20 to Mr. Johnson. Mitch, do you see Venita Hervey?

21 MS. HERVEY: Yes. I'm here.

22 MS. SIMMONS: You are unmuted. Please
23 proceed.

24 MS. HERVEY: Thank you. My name is Venita

1 Hervey. V-E-N-I-T-A. Hervey. H-E-R-V-E-Y.

2 In 2015, I was the person who filed the
3 application for a hearing with regard to Mercy
4 Health's application for this one hospital, two
5 campuses. I was appalled at the closing of
6 services.

7 First of all, the level I trauma center.
8 This is the area with the highest number of
9 traumas. Trauma centers are not designed to make
10 money. They take care of people who are
11 critically injured. We have the gunshot wounds.
12 We have the penetrating wounds. We have the blunt
13 force wounds. In this area, I'm not proud of
14 that, but it is a fact.

15 Gunshot wounds are rarely going to be out
16 on Riverside, but we lost our level I trauma
17 center, and, with that, we lost lives in this
18 community. At the time in 2015, Mr. Bea's MO was
19 to come in and threaten. If you don't give me
20 what I want, I will shut it down. He said that to
21 me at 9:00 o'clock one night. Venita, if you
22 oppose me, I will shut it down. And I said go
23 ahead and shut it down. I don't want my health
24 care coming from a hospital source.

1 The City of Rockford has tried to work
2 with Mr. Bea on this whole issue of the flooding
3 at Rockford Memorial. Rockford Memorial has been
4 flooding for at least 30 years, and it had nothing
5 to do with the way that the houses were built up
6 around there. It does have to do with the fact
7 that Rockford Memorial paved over almost every
8 inch of grass on their campus over the years.
9 There's multiple sources.

10 Mr. Bea didn't want to pay the permit
11 fees, so he came in and said, if you oppose me,
12 I'll move it to Beloit. I'll move it to
13 Wisconsin. And I said go ahead and move it. Of
14 course, he didn't. But Rockford's Alderman
15 capitulated and cut his fees in half. The state
16 of Illinois gave him \$10 million to build the
17 roads around his hospital. Everyone has
18 cooperated with him and worked with him.

19 As far as I'm concerned, this latest round
20 of cuts is orchestrated. I think it's been
21 orchestrated from the beginning. Rockford
22 Memorial is a shadow of its former self --

23 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

24 MS. HERVEY: -- I used to get all of my

1 health care at Rockford Memorial, and I moved it
2 all to Swedish American.

3 This committee, this Board, doesn't have
4 the authority to deny this petition. Senator Dave
5 Syverson saw to that in, I think, 2014 when the
6 law was changed so that we no longer have even the
7 power to ask for the state to protect our
8 interests.

9 I will submit written comments, because
10 there's much more to say. Thank you.

11 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Mitch, do we see
12 Alderman McNeely?

13 MR. MITCHELL: No, I don't. Let's go back
14 to Mr. Johnson.

15 MR. JOHNSON: Hello. Can you hear me now?

16 MS. SIMMONS: Yes.

17 MR. JOHNSON: Excellent. I'm Harlan.

18 H-A-R-L-A-N. Johnson, a community therapist
19 living in Parker Woods, a stable, integrated
20 subdivision located just west of Rockford.

21 I'm deeply concerned about the public's
22 erosion of trust in government. Because Javon Bea
23 lied, breaking his promise by closing Mercy's west
24 side emergency room and inpatient hospital with

1 total impunity, I want to know, is the Illinois
2 Health Facilities and Services Review Board also
3 breaking the public trust by colluding with Bea to
4 do absolutely nothing to stop him?

5 People in west Rockford die without an
6 emergency response from our only west side
7 hospital. I would be dead if Rockford Memorial
8 Hospital hadn't been there ten years ago when I
9 fell off my roof and was bleeding out. The level
10 I emergency department saved my life with
11 immediate surgery. This is personal for me.

12 As president of the Northern Illinois
13 Institute for the Healing of Racism, Incorporated,
14 I'm outraged at this blatant action to expand
15 institutional racism in health care. What needs
16 to happen to hold the Illinois Review Board and
17 Mercy Health accountable for their betrayal of
18 Rockford citizens?

19 We appealed to Governor Pritzker to
20 intervene. Federal intervention to confront the
21 systemic racism is justified based on the
22 Affordable Care Act Section 1557 and Title VI
23 regarding Javon Bea's actions which put profit for
24 Mr. Bea over the very lives of the people of west

1 Rockford, the lives of stakeholders, not
2 shareholders.

3 And what's this about so many paid
4 testimonies from Bea's employees testifying rather
5 than citizen input? Thank you.

6 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Next, we will
7 have Taj Guzzardo. G-U-Z-Z-A-R-D-O.

8 MS. GUZZARDO: Yes. Can you hear me?

9 MS. SIMMONS: Yes, we can. Please
10 proceed.

11 MS. GUZZARDO: I will cut out a little
12 bit, like two or three seconds, and then I'll
13 repeat what I said.

14 With the closure of medical and surgical
15 service at the Rockton Avenue Campus, Javon Bea
16 Mercy Hospital is abandoning the west side. As a
17 person who grew up on the west side and proud of
18 it, I find this closure deplorable. I find it
19 (indiscernible) Mr. Bea that you grew up on the
20 west side. It appears you feel no scruples about
21 betraying your own west side.

22 A friend of mine has a daughter living in
23 the Searles housing project. This woman has no
24 car. The nearest hospital to her is Rockford

1 Memorial. Previously, she suffered a miscarriage
2 and was taken to Rockford Memorial. Her condition
3 was serious with minutes counting. What will she
4 do if she is in need of a hospital in the near
5 future?

6 The east side now has two hospitals at
7 their disposal. Prejudice? Yes. I ask how can a
8 hospital be so uncaring of our community's need,
9 the west side. By this action, I see no mercy in
10 Javon Bea Mercy Hospital. Thank you.

11 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Mr. Morado?

12 MR. MORADO: Yes. Thank you. I'd like to
13 begin my comments by thanking staff for all of
14 their work in putting in today's public hearing.
15 We appreciate your time and we welcome the
16 feedback from the community on the proposed plan
17 regarding the medical/surgical beds at the Rockton
18 Avenue Campus.

19 This decision was not an easy one but
20 ensures appropriate health planning and
21 utilization of the existing facility in the long
22 term per this Board's mission.

23 We would note the following: The
24 applicant has provided all of the required

1 information per the Illinois Health Facilities
2 Planning Act; they've been deemed substantially
3 complete by HFSRB staff; and they are, therefore,
4 legally entitled to approval pursuant to 77
5 Illinois Admin Code 1130560B1, which provides that
6 the HFSRB shall approve an application for
7 exemption that it determines to be in compliance
8 with the requirements.

9 This is no longer a discretionary matter.
10 Having met all the Board's requirements pursuant
11 to the Board's own rules, this project is entitled
12 to approval as a matter of law. As we discussed
13 today, this change in services will allow Mercy
14 Health to continue to offer robust outpatient
15 services to the community at the Rockton Avenue
16 Campus.

17 You heard from Mercy's clinical staff
18 about the spectrum of access to care in the health
19 care delivery system, and the hospital feels this
20 plan will continue to provide that access. You've
21 also heard about the advancements in Mercy
22 Health's MD-1 and how that will change
23 on-the-scene emergency care.

24 The data is clear. We recognize that this

1 is an emotional issue and that health care is very
2 personal. But this decision is part of a
3 thoughtful regional approach to health planning.
4 And the closure of Mercy's underutilized inpatient
5 medical/surgical beds will allow for the better
6 utilization of the existing facilities in the
7 community. This much has been made clear through
8 the testimony by our own employees today.

9 This is the same approach that Mercy
10 Health takes systemwide. Mercy Health alone has
11 been investing significant amounts of money in the
12 west side community of Rockford and will continue
13 to do so following the approval of this
14 application. Thank you, again, for your time.

15 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Next, I have Eli
16 Nikolosi. Do you see Mr. Nikolosi?

17 MR. MITCHELL: No. I do not see that name
18 on the list of attendees.

19 MS. SIMMONS: Okay. Let's go to Paul
20 Klazura. K-L-A-Z-U-R-A.

21 DR. KLAZURA: Hello. I believe you could
22 hear me.

23 My name is Paul Klazura, and I'm a retired
24 physician. I was a vascular surgeon who worked

1 primarily out of Rockford Memorial for the better
2 part of 25 years. I've been involved with --
3 toward the end of my career -- with Mr. Bea's
4 decision to build a hospital on the east side.

5 I think, to a certain extent, Mr. Bea has
6 been trying to walk a tightrope, trying to keep
7 both ends together in the middle. But I think
8 with the approval of the hospital being built on
9 the east side, which was primarily for profit to
10 improve the payor mix, the genie came out of the
11 bottle. It's impossible to put that genie back in
12 the bottle. We can't have Rockford Memorial the
13 way we all remember it and have something out on
14 Riverside at the same time.

15 I think it's inevitable that Mr. Bea,
16 through all of his deception and disingenuous
17 comments, is ultimately going to close Rockford
18 Memorial Hospital as we all know it. It's sad,
19 but I think it's true. I think if there's
20 anything that could be done here, I think Mercy
21 Health System needs to be turned into a for-profit
22 organization. It's not for -- it's not a
23 not-for-profit organization.

24 We've heard Mr. Anderson speaking from

1 within a conference room talk nothing about money.
2 All the time we hear about the bottom line.
3 Bottom line for health care should be good health
4 care. The bottom line for Mr. Bea is how much
5 money he can make in the business of health care.

6 So that said, I am certainly in agreement
7 with the Mayor and Representative West and
8 everyone else who's concerned about how
9 disingenuous and untruthful Mr. Bea has been to
10 this entire community.

11 The concept that he grew up on the west
12 side and now he's always going to be thinking of
13 Rockford I think is just silliness. It doesn't
14 mean anything. He gets none of his health care in
15 Rockford.

16 So that said, I hope the Board does the
17 right thing. Unfortunately, we all don't know
18 what the right thing is, other than Mr. Bea will
19 ultimately close the hospital on Rockton Avenue.
20 Thank you for your time.

21 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Jamie Wilson
22 Cook.

23 MR. MITCHELL: I do not see that name. I
24 would remind people if they are calling in on the

1 phone to use star 3 to raise their hand.

2 MS. SIMMONS: Okay. Did we -- Gary
3 Anderson. Did we do you yet or no? No. Okay.
4 You're unmuted. Mr. Anderson?

5 MR. ANDERSON: Yes. Can you hear me?

6 MS. SIMMONS: Yes, we can. Please
7 proceed.

8 MR. ANDERSON: Gary Anderson. G-A-R-Y.
9 A-N-D-E-R-S-O-N. I'm the chair of the Great
10 Neighborhoods Organization that serves as an
11 advocate for --

12 THE REPORTER: I'm sorry. Can you speak
13 up? I'm having a hard time hearing you.

14 MR. ANDERSON: Okay. Can you hear me now
15 better?

16 THE REPORTER: Yes.

17 MR. ANDERSON: Recent requests to close
18 the former Rockford Memorial Hospital on Rockton
19 Avenue is a catastrophic decision that affects
20 60,000 people on Rockford's west side. That's
21 beyond the boundaries of Rockford.

22 We join our northwest neighbors in
23 opposing its closure. It's even more disturbing
24 and disappointing that the Javon Bea Hospital and

1 its board of directors has disenfranchised some of
2 its most vulnerable and growing population in our
3 city.

4 It's even more disappointing for
5 Rockford's northwest neighborhoods that over \$50
6 million was going to be expended on improving, not
7 repairing, flood damage the old Rockford Memorial
8 Hospital, which has evaporated without any
9 explanation.

10 We have heard plenty of excuses from Javon
11 Bea as to why they wouldn't invest or reinvest in
12 the site. Issues of flooding are a result of the
13 hospital's own poor planning and development of
14 that site, having paved over the entire site for
15 surface parking with absolutely no stormwater
16 detention and the exposing of the hospital's
17 basement to potential flooding is all of their own
18 making.

19 Cooperate mismanagement and poor planning
20 have created a self-fulfilled prophecy of never
21 intending to renovate the facility and then
22 blaming others to shift that responsibility. In
23 addition, their corporate decisions over the past
24 two years on eliminating critical services at this

1 location reflects the hospital's intent to
2 disconnect from those in most need for medical
3 services.

4 The most critical loss has been the total
5 closure of the emergency services. All of these
6 changes and reductions were done without any
7 engagement of the community they serve. Any
8 explanation provided as to what services would
9 remain for the persons disadvantaged by their
10 closures.

11 We implore that the Board of Health deny
12 the hospital's application for closure of this
13 facility. We recognize the issue regarding the
14 number of beds in our community, however, we feel
15 that a full-service health care facility is
16 definitely needed here.

17 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

18 MR. ANDERSON: The intent of this proposal
19 is to remove critical services from a neighborhood
20 that's totally disadvantaged. Neighborhoods value
21 medical services as much as schools and grocery
22 stores, and they are central assets to support
23 viable neighborhoods and communities. We
24 recommend a denial of the application.

1 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Jay Larsen. I
2 do not see that name, Mitch. Do you?

3 MR. MITCHELL: No, I do not see that on
4 our list.

5 MS. SIMMONS: Okay. Then let's go to
6 Amanda Smesia. Do you see her? She has her hand
7 raised. There you go. You are unmuted.

8 MS. CISMESIA: Hello. Can you hear me?

9 MS. SIMMONS: Yes. Please proceed.

10 MS. CISMESIA: My name is Amanda Lake
11 Cismesia. A-M-A-N-D-A. L-A-K-E.
12 C-I-S-M-E-S-I-A.

13 I'm here to share my family's experience
14 with Mercy Health System and the impact of the
15 reductions in care available in our community.
16 Along with my husband Jeff, we have two daughters,
17 Hannah and Audrey. My daughters were ages three
18 years and eight months when the new hospital was
19 opened. I remember touring the building at the
20 grand opening and hearing about the services
21 available.

22 As a mother of young children, it was
23 comforting to have a children's hospital close by
24 and to know that our girls could receive emergency

1 or specialty care at a local hospital, if needed.

2 Unfortunately, at one year old, our
3 youngest daughter began suffering from significant
4 health complications. Although Audrey was
5 previously healthy, she began having seizures that
6 were diagnosed as infantile spasms, which is a
7 catastrophic type of epilepsy that often leads to
8 intractable seizures, developmental delays,
9 autism, and other behavioral or neurological
10 problems. To this day, we still don't know what
11 caused Audrey to have this disorder.

12 Audrey's condition requires treatment from
13 a team of specialists as well as frequent
14 inpatient hospitalizations. Unfortunately, as a
15 result of Mercy Health System's reductions in
16 services, our daughter's care team has eroded over
17 the past two years and we continue to struggle to
18 access services to meet her needs.

19 Audrey's neurologist was let go from the
20 health system in 2020 when Mercy eliminated
21 pediatric neurology services. The inpatient unit
22 that was familiar with Audrey was also closed in
23 2020. During a recent viral illness, when we
24 called the Mercy emergency room to seek care for

1 an increase in seizures, we were told not to bring
2 her there since they no longer had facilities to
3 help her.

4 Audrey needs EEGs at least twice per year,
5 and those also now have to be done in Madison or
6 other hospitals. Audrey requires speech,
7 developmental therapies, behavioral health
8 services, and autism services. Mercy has
9 eliminated many of those services as well.

10 We were recently referred for case
11 management to support Audrey's complex needs and
12 were informed that Mercy eliminated outpatient
13 case management services. Just last week, we
14 received yet another notification that Audrey's
15 ophthalmologist is leaving and we will need to
16 locate another provider for that service as well.

17 The amount of time required to coordinate
18 the providers and services, drive to out-of-state
19 appointments and hospitals, and appeal for
20 insurance coverage has had a direct impact on our
21 family's quality of life and Audrey's health and
22 developmental outcomes.

23 The Illinois Health Facilities Planning
24 Act requires that modification or closure of

1 health care facilities meets the following
2 requirements.

3 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

4 MS. CISMESIA: I'm almost done.

5 It shall establish a comprehensive health
6 care delivery system and guarantee the
7 availability of quality care to the public and it
8 shall assure that the reduction or closure of
9 health care services or facilities are deemed to
10 be in the best interest of the public.

11 The Rockford region has significant needs
12 for behavioral health care, services for children
13 and youth with special needs, and access to
14 quality and comprehensive health care services
15 across the lifespan.

16 I'm here to ask that the lawmakers
17 involved in this proceeding today would require
18 Mercy Health System to follow through on their
19 commitment to provide adequate care for the needs
20 of our region. The actions they have taken have
21 reduced the available care in our community and
22 left families like mine without critically needed
23 health care for our loved ones.

24 I'm asking for his body to hold Mercy

1 Health and Mr. Javon Bea accountable to ensure
2 that the services needed across our community
3 remain available and accessible at the local
4 hospitals. Thank you for your time.

5 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Ms. Mila Meeks.
6 You are unmuted. Please proceed. Ms. Meeks?
7 Ms. Meeks, you can proceed.

8 MS. MEEKS: Yes. I think pretty much
9 everything's been said that I was going to say.

10 I -- I live on the west end of Rockford.
11 I have a lot of medical issues. And it's been a
12 very -- it's been very inconvenient for me to have
13 to move all my doctors over to Riverside.

14 And I work for the CDC and the handwriting
15 has been -- it's been written on the wall five
16 years ago that they were going to move. And
17 nothing has been done to try to get us a facility
18 over here. And I think it's disgusting.

19 So I hope that we can get something over
20 here, but I don't think it's fair that they're
21 going to take our health care away. That's all I
22 have to say.

23 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Let's go to
24 Sarah Dorner.

1 MS. DORNER: Yes. Can you hear me?

2 MS. SIMMONS: We can. Please proceed.

3 MS. DORNER: I'm Sarah Dorner and I'm
4 speaking with you today as a member of Women's
5 March Rockford and as the president of Rockford
6 United Labor.

7 In 1992, when I was 12, my dad was
8 installing a window in the attic of our home when
9 he fell from the third story onto the sidewalk.
10 He was rushed to Rockford Memorial Hospital,
11 broken nearly everything, and was in critical
12 condition.

13 My mother, a working mother of four
14 school-aged children, had to be at the hospital
15 regularly to make critical decisions regarding my
16 father's health. He was in the hospital bed for
17 ten weeks at Rockford Memorial. I remember doing
18 my homework in his hospital room, because medical
19 crisis does not make time for the rest of the
20 world.

21 I worry for the women who cannot load four
22 children into her car on a school night to drive
23 45 minutes or an hour away to participate in the
24 medical care of her loved one. And I shutter to

1 think of the children who risk losing their father
2 because the nearest hospital is too far away.

3 My father lived. And, in fact, in 2013,
4 when I had my son at Rockford Memorial Hospital,
5 he sat with me and we discussed how happy we were
6 to be together, for good reasons.

7 Finally, I do want to say that we can
8 shout out to the west side all we want, but for
9 those who lived their lives on the west side of
10 Rockford, we know that it is more than a
11 geographic location. It is a way of life. And it
12 is the solidarity of having seen business after
13 business shut down, a landscape of vacant
14 buildings. And those of us who truly care about
15 and love the west side, we can say that we are
16 from the west side because we come back and we
17 invest in it.

18 Maybe put some of that \$9 million a year
19 salary that Mr. Bea is making off of our medical
20 crisis into building up the west side. Bring a
21 union into the hospital, get people good, quality
22 jobs with dignity, and show pride in our
23 community. I'll tell you what, if you abandon us,
24 don't be claiming the west side, because we will

1 not claim you, sir.

2 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Jim Roberts.

3 MR. ROBERTS: Can you hear me?

4 MS. SIMMONS: Yes. You are unmuted.

5 Please proceed.

6 MR. ROBERTS: I'm Jim Roberts.

7 R-O-B-E-R-T-S. I've been a pastor in Rockford for
8 49 years, so I've seen a lot. I've been president
9 of the Greater Rockford Clergy Association for
10 some years.

11 I'm committed to the whole city. I mean
12 that. I have been very upset over these years
13 watching so much move east in Rockford; colleges,
14 hotels, restaurants, all kinds of things,
15 including health care.

16 The west side has been slighted over and
17 over, but at least we had a hospital, and it was
18 -- that was huge on the west side and a good one.
19 I worked there as a chaplain for a while. And the
20 staff was great. It was a great place and a safe
21 place.

22 I was at the Rockford Minsters Fellowship,
23 which is pretty much west side pastors, I was
24 there when Mr. Bea met with the pretty much black

1 pastors and a few of us and promised -- even like
2 a vow -- to not move services out of Rockford
3 Memorial, not move -- that -- that means
4 something. A promise means something to me. And
5 some of us were really worried about what would
6 happen but had some trust in what a promise was.

7 Well, moving Rockford Memorial --
8 decimating Rockford Memorial would not be a
9 slight; it would be a critical care wound to this
10 whole community. We prayed this would not happen.
11 But we've watched services, over and over, remove
12 piece by piece, brick by brick from the west side
13 and from former Rockford Memorial. We felt
14 abandoned and misled, even betrayed.

15 And pastors don't feel that way quick --
16 real quick. That's serious. The only way to
17 right this wrong is to show you care, to hear our
18 prayers, to return services to Rockford Memorial
19 Rockton Campus, and make it right. Make it right.

20 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

21 MR. ROBERTS: I would support rejecting
22 the current application very strongly.

23 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Douglas Ricks.

24 MR. RIX: Yes. Thank you. My name is

1 Douglas Rix. That's, D-O-U-G-L-A-S, R-I-X.

2 Javon Bea, the CEO of Mercy Health,
3 negotiated for a new Mercy Hospital on Riverside
4 Avenue. When questioned if this would affect the
5 existing Mercy Hospital on Rockton Avenue's
6 services, Javon Bea assured the Rockford city
7 officials that the Rockford Mercy Hospital on
8 Rockton Avenue would not be dismantled -- or their
9 services dismantled.

10 What happened next was untenable.
11 Rockford Mercy on Rockford Avenue services have
12 been increasingly dismantled. Physician clinics
13 have been moved from Rockford Mercy on Rockton to
14 Mercy Hospital on Riverside. This is
15 unconscionable, as many people on the west side of
16 Rockford have limited financial means and depend
17 on Rockford Mercy on Rockford Avenue.

18 Consider the following. I'm confident
19 that many people who live on the west side depend
20 on physician clinics at Rockford Mercy Hospital on
21 Rockton and cannot afford a car or the gas to get
22 them to the physician clinics at Rockford Mercy on
23 Riverside.

24 It is my understanding that the emergency

1 department of the Rockford Mercy Hospital on
2 Rockton Avenue have been greatly reduced, and
3 people have been advised to go to the Mercy
4 Hospital on Riverside. The Mercy Hospital on
5 Riverside is about 10 minutes from my home. And
6 the Rockford Mercy Hospital on Rockton Avenue is
7 about 15 to 20 minutes from my house.

8 At times, in an emergency situation, every
9 minute may be the difference between life and
10 death.

11 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

12 MR. RIX: Is 45 minutes really acceptable?
13 This is not a matter of law. It's a matter of
14 morality. And the physicians who back up this
15 application should remember what they promised,
16 first, do no harm.

17 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

18 MR. RIX: Thank you.

19 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Kimberly
20 Babcock. Mitch, I don't see that name. I'm not
21 sure if that's -- do you see Ms. Babcock?

22 MR. MITCHELL: No. I do not have Kimberly
23 Babcock.

24 MS. SIMMONS: Okay. If you are a call-in

1 user, please dial star 3. I'm also looking at the
2 hands that's raised and calling them as well.

3 Camille Lawson.

4 MR. MITCHELL: I do not have Camille
5 Lawson.

6 MS. SIMMONS: Okay. Mary Smith.

7 MS. SMITH: Can you hear me? Hello? Can
8 you hear me?

9 MS. SIMMONS: Yes, we can. Yes, we can.
10 Please proceed.

11 MS. SMITH: Hi. My name is Mary Smith.
12 M-A-R-Y. S-M-I-T-H.

13 And I couldn't agree more with the
14 majority of the west side callers in saying their
15 services have been stripped. The west side in
16 Rockford is becoming a nuclear disaster zone of
17 abandoned buildings. This will be one more
18 gigantic scar in Rockford. Now, that's more for
19 the city I'm saying that, but it's obviously for
20 the commission of hospitals.

21 For the commission of hospitals, I want
22 you to know that Rockford Memorial, AKA Javon Bea
23 on Rockton, serves all of Winnebago County, the
24 north side of Winnebago County, all the way

1 through the west side and southwest side Winnebago
2 County.

3 For people to travel all the way to
4 Riverside and I-90 from Duran is a huge
5 difference. And those people need representation
6 too. How they will survive out there without
7 having a west side hospital is really, really
8 beyond me.

9 And I'd like to applaud Mr. Morado for
10 saying that all they had to do was fill out the
11 paperwork to get the hospital changed --
12 discontinued. And that's all they had to do to
13 pass. And it's a sure thing that they'll pass.
14 I'd like to have that investigated. It seems to
15 me that if you're going to have a meeting that
16 involves input from the community, then that input
17 ought to count for something. Thank you.

18 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Gary Scortino.

19 MR. MITCHELL: That name is not on the
20 list.

21 MS. SIMMONS: Okay. Again, if you are a
22 call-in and I've called your name, please just
23 press star 3. I am also calling those that have
24 their hand raised. Ann Rundall.

1 MS. RUNDALL: Can you hear me?

2 MS. SIMMONS: Yes, we can. Please
3 proceed.

4 MS. RUNDALL: All right. My name is Ann
5 Rundall. R-U-N-D-A-L-L. I'm a resident of the
6 west side. Please do not allow Mercy Health to
7 close and deplete services on the Rockton Avenue
8 Hospital. The residents of the west side of
9 Rockford deserve and they also need a high quality
10 health care system that's easily accessible.

11 In 2015, Mercy Health System applied to
12 this Board for plans to add a second hospital to
13 the east side of Rockford. The hearing for the
14 approval of that hospital was held in a Chicago
15 suburb at a country club for goodness sakes. Do
16 you feel that the residents of the west side of
17 Rockford had adequate representation?

18 It was hardly convenient for the residents
19 of the west side of Rockford to attend, however,
20 who -- the people that did attend were two
21 busloads of employees, all in matching T-shirts,
22 from the Javon Bea Mercy Hospital. And they
23 testified about how wonderful it would be to have
24 a brand new hospital, just like the employees

1 today who have been speaking up in favor of this
2 proposal have almost exclusively been employees.
3 We all know employees don't have a choice when
4 their employer says, hey, I need you to go speak
5 at this hearing for us.

6 Those of us who did make it to the country
7 club in the Chicago suburb to testify against the
8 new hospital knew that separate has never been
9 equal. And --

10 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

11 MS. RUNDALL: -- and the -- what has
12 happened recently has just proven that, once
13 again, separate has never been equal. Thank you.

14 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Dyanna Walker.

15 MS. WALKER: I'm here.

16 MS. SIMMONS: Please proceed. Thank you.

17 MS. WALKER: Can you hear me?

18 MS. SIMMONS: Yes, we can.

19 MS. WALKER: Good afternoon. I am Dyanna,
20 D-Y-A-N-N-A, Rose, R-O-S-E, Walker, W-A-L-K-E-R.

21 A patient since age 16 in the Rockford
22 Health System, now known as Mercy Health.
23 Currently, I have my primary and eight specialty
24 physicians in the system. Since my first day as a

1 patient, I received exemplary comprehensive health
2 care and customer service.

3 The news of Mercy Health's application
4 proposal to discontinue 70 medical/surgical beds
5 at Rockton Avenue campus of the Javon Bea Hospital
6 is troubling. Although, it's described in the
7 application as substantive.

8 Further, Mercy Health lists the reason for
9 discontinuation as the patient census is
10 insufficient to justify the continued operation of
11 a second inpatient medical/surgical set of beds in
12 the Rockton Campus, stating that the capacity at
13 the Riverside campus is more sufficient to meet
14 the need for health care. I differ with this,
15 however, time does not allow me to list the
16 statistics that disavow that declaration.

17 In actuality, the application is a final
18 layer to replace comprehensive health care with
19 specialty health care. The foundation was laid in
20 2015 and endorsed by the recklessness of elected
21 officials who voted to provide a flimflam card
22 artist displaying magic potions and advertising
23 the London Bridge with \$25 million of taxpayer
24 funds.

1 Consequently, this flimflam artist has
2 removed capable physicians, eliminated and
3 transferred medical service from the Rockton
4 Avenue campus, thus, creating a greater hardship
5 on the already underserved to receive
6 comprehensive health care. Suffice to say, the
7 approval of this application will not only
8 embolden the applicant to replace comprehensive
9 health care on the Rockton Avenue campus --

10 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

11 MS. WALKER: I'm almost done. Establish
12 specialty health care on the Riverside campus but
13 also allow the applicant to perpetuate systematic
14 bait-and-switch tactics, thus, depriving the
15 underserved with access to viable comprehensive
16 health care.

17 This is the Midwest where comprehensive
18 health care is sorely needed, not Rodeo Drive in
19 Hollywood. I implore the members of this
20 committee to apply a tourniquet to prevent
21 continuing hemorrhaging in an already depleted
22 health care system campus.

23 I urge you, members who are appointed to
24 serve the citizens of Illinois in the area of

1 comprehensive health care needs --

2 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

3 MS. WALKER: -- to deny the applicant's
4 request. Thank you for this opportunity to share
5 concerns from a patient in the applicant's health
6 care system.

7 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Josephine Minor.
8 I see three.

9 MS. MINOR: (Indiscernible.)

10 MS. SIMMONS: You have feedback.

11 MS. MINOR: Hello?

12 MS. SIMMONS: Ms. Minor, you have slight
13 feedback.

14 MS. MINOR: How can I fix that?

15 MS. SIMMONS: You must have multiple --
16 multiple things going, so you need to silence one
17 or two.

18 MS. MINOR: Okay. Is that better? Maybe.

19 MS. SIMMONS: Well, you have two. You're
20 listed as three people on here.

21 MS. MINOR: All right. Okay. Is that
22 better?

23 MS. SIMMONS: No. You're still on the
24 echo with your other -- with your other technology

1 that's you're on, you need to turn the volume
2 down.

3 MS. MINOR: Okay. All right. Better?

4 MS. SIMMONS: That's a little bit better.
5 BUT go ahead. Go ahead.

6 MS. MINOR: Okay. All right. Thank you
7 for the opportunity to address this Board today.
8 I speak as a community member concerned about all
9 our citizens.

10 If we diminish one part of our community,
11 we diminish all of our community. We are only as
12 strong as the sum of our parts, and we are about
13 to diminish a whole section of our community.

14 Mercy assured us when they took over
15 Rockford Memorial and built a glittering facility
16 on the east side that Rockford Memorial Mercy on
17 Rockton Avenue would continue to be a viable
18 option for all citizens living on the west side,
19 and that includes Winnebago County. In fact, many
20 east siders also use the Rockton Avenue Memorial
21 -- Rockford Memorial.

22 Since then, they have slowly eroded all
23 services on Rockton Avenue. The trauma services
24 were eliminated at the beginning of the pandemic

1 in 2020. Last month, the ER was converted to a
2 standby facility staffed by nurses with one
3 physician on call in an area that desperately
4 needs emergency services.

5 A 20-bed mental health facility wing was
6 also closed in 2020. And now, Javon Bea, CEO of
7 Mercy, has announced he will be discontinuing
8 surgical inpatient facilities and will move those
9 to the east side. Rockton Avenue has become a
10 shell of its former self. People from the west
11 side have a hard time getting to the east side.
12 In many, many times, there is no viable public
13 transportation. They don't have the means. They
14 don't have the wherewithal to get there. It is a
15 hardship. And it is terribly hard on these
16 people.

17 I believe that it is morally and ethically
18 irresponsible of Mercy to diminish the health of
19 human beings. Please do not allow this
20 application to move forward. And as other people
21 have said, the only people who seem in favor of
22 this are Mercy employees. Thank you.

23 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Jeremiah
24 Griffin.

1 MR. GRIFFIN: Hello. Can you hear me?

2 MS. SIMMONS: Yes, we can. Please
3 proceed.

4 MR. GRIFFIN: My name is Jeremiah,
5 J-E-R-E-M-I-A-H. Griffin. G-R-I-F-F-I-N.

6 I am a pastor here in Rockford at Halsted
7 Road Baptist Church. We moved to Rockford in 2006
8 with our young family. And six days after we
9 moved here, we found ourselves at Rockford
10 Memorial. My wife had been pregnant, and we had a
11 baby rather quickly. We were supposed to be a few
12 more -- well, hopefully a couple more months at
13 that time.

14 Because of the neonatal service in the
15 unit that was there, I can now tell you that my
16 son is alive and well and currently driving across
17 country with his grandfather with his brand new
18 driver's license. It is an amazing thing to have
19 such a resource in our backyard.

20 The reason we knew about the hospital and
21 one of the reasons that we moved to Rockford was
22 to be near the facility that was there. For
23 generations, our family has worked there. My
24 wife's grandfather has worked there, put in the

1 pneumatic tube system back in the day and watched
2 the hospital as it's continued to grow and to
3 offer services. And now four generations of our
4 family use that hospital.

5 I'm also a foster and adoptive parent.
6 Mercy's faux pas with all of the craziness with
7 Medicaid has caused us some craziness in our
8 family as well. All of my foster children's lives
9 they've lived with their biological parents,
10 they've been passed from person to person. Their
11 lives are hurt and full of chaos, but the one
12 consistent thing that they had, even when we got
13 them, was we took them to their doctor, and now
14 that's not an ability. That's not something we
15 can do.

16 As the campus continues to shrink, even
17 though, apparently, they've put lots of money
18 there, from the outside, we watched the cars
19 gather fewer and fewer and the buildings slowly
20 one by one be closed up.

21 Mercy has already stopped so many services
22 to local families. It's -- the morality of it is
23 crazy. We're asking you to stop this because this
24 is hurting the families of Rockford all across the

1 board. It doesn't matter the political, it
2 doesn't matter their socioeconomic status, it
3 doesn't matter their poverty level. It really
4 just matters to people. And so we would ask you
5 that you consider that at this time.

6 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

7 MR. GRIFFIN: How does the future of
8 medical service in Rockford look if you allow this
9 hospital to close? What kinds of things are there
10 that will be able to take its place? How will
11 this look for this side of town, and, again, not
12 just this side of town, but this region? And --

13 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

14 MR. GRIFFIN: How can you tell us that
15 they're running out of beds in the hospital and
16 that they only have two beds left in a press
17 release and make a big splash on the news? And,
18 yet, you want to close down a bunch of beds that
19 could possibly treat people. It's very confusing.

20 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

21 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you, Mr. Griffin.

22 Thank you. Dick Rundall. You are unmuted.

23 MR. RUNDALL: Thank you. Can you hear me?

24 MS. SIMMONS: Yes, we can. Please

1 proceed.

2 MR. RUNDALL: Okay. My name is Dick
3 Rundall. R-U-N-D-A-L-L.

4 I am the president of the board of
5 directors of eliminate racism 815 and was
6 authorized at the board meeting on the 21st of
7 January to speak on behalf of the organization.

8 We've had a tremendous amount of
9 testimony. To me, some of the more interesting
10 testimony has been about the fact that Mercy
11 Health is a not-for-profit corporation. Peter
12 Drucker, the famous business consultant, wrote a
13 book arguing that the purpose of a for-profit
14 corporation is to be efficient and the purpose of
15 a not-for-profit corporation is to be effective.

16 Mercy Health's mission is to provide high
17 quality health care to people. It seems that
18 there was some decision made before the decision
19 was made to move to Riverside, and that was to
20 have fewer Medicaid and Medicare patients.

21 The decision to open up a second facility
22 was not to place it on the west side where there
23 was plenty of property much closer around the edge
24 of town, much closer to the Rockton Campus. But

1 to move it far away, so, indeed, it was hard to
2 get there.

3 A second intentional decision, to me,
4 seems to be to move a lot of the specialties --

5 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

6 MR. RUNDALL: -- out of the Riverside --
7 or out of the Rockton Hospital to Riverside, which
8 means that people did not have adequate care in
9 the Rockton Campus at all. Now, we want to create
10 less. Thank you.

11 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Rev. Stephen
12 Bowie.

13 MR. MITCHELL: I do not have that name on
14 my list.

15 MS. SIMMONS: Okay. Again, if you are a
16 call-in user or if I have not called your name,
17 please either raise your hand or -- what is it --
18 dial star 3. I am looking at both the hands
19 raised. And a separate list of previously signed
20 in. Evan Schoepski, you are unmuted.

21 MR. SCHOEPSKI: Can you hear me?

22 MS. SIMMONS: Yes.

23 MR. SCHOEPSKI: My name is Evan Schoepski.
24 That's, E-V-A-N, S-C-H-O-E-P-S-K-I.

1 I obviously wanted to speak out in
2 opposition to the closing of Rockton health care.
3 I'd like to thank Juan Morado, the legal counsel
4 for Mercy Health, for spitting the legality at us
5 without touching on the morality. He obviously
6 knows it's indefensible. That's why the morality
7 wasn't brought up.

8 It's also incredibly telling to me that no
9 one in our community has spoken out in support of
10 this closure today. I've been on the call since
11 you started it this morning at 12:50 p.m. Not a
12 single person has spoken out in favor of the
13 proposal that has not been bought and paid for by
14 Javon Bea or Mercy Health.

15 61103 and 61101 are two of our poorest --
16 when it comes to median average income, they are
17 two of our poorest. And those account for 60
18 percent of Javon Bea at Rockford Memorial's
19 patients. So 60 percent of the poorest people in
20 our county entirely -- sorry. My son's yelling in
21 the background.

22 So anybody that is in the poorest ZIP
23 codes in our city, in our county, totally unable
24 to get care once this is closed. The campus has

1 been slowly stripped of its services over the past
2 two years, and the complete closure is very
3 obvious -- very obviously Javon Bea's end game.
4 He's been talking out of one corner of his mouth
5 while saying something else out of the other
6 corner repeatedly.

7 The closure will unequivocally impact the
8 poorest and most vulnerable citizens in our county
9 all while Mercy continues to grow, topping
10 \$1 billion in revenue in the previous year.

11 A speaker mentioned her mother's home
12 behind Auburn High School. That's an 11 mile, 20
13 minute drive to the Riverside campus. It's an
14 extra three minutes to travel to Swedish American.
15 And that is assuming that these individuals have a
16 personal vehicle that are able to transport them
17 to these places that are even further from their
18 home.

19 In our capitalist society where everything
20 needs to be profitable or it is deemed
21 unnecessary, how is saving lives up for
22 discussion? Health care is a human right put
23 forth in our Constitution. We hold these truths
24 to be self-evident that all men are created equal

1 and women, that they are endowed by their creator
2 with certain unalienable rights, that these are
3 among life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

4 Javon Bea, you should be ashamed of
5 yourself. And your name is now synonymous with
6 crook, evil, heartless, and the people of
7 Winnebago County will not forget you.

8 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

9 MR. SCHOEPSKI: I'm done.

10 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Rev. Violet
11 Johnicker, you are unmuted. There you go.

12 REV. JOHNICKER: Thank you very much.
13 Reverend Violet Johnicker. J-O-H-N-I-C-K-E-R.

14 I serve Brook Road United Methodist Church
15 here in Rockford. Thank you for holding this
16 hearing today and for taking seriously the
17 concerns of the Rockford community. I am also
18 here to speak against the proposed discontinuation
19 of services at Mercy Health on Rockton. And, like
20 others, just wanted to thank the dedicated nurses,
21 doctors, and health care workers who are working
22 so hard every day to care for the community.

23 Underlying this discussion is the argument
24 that keeping these services in operation doesn't

1 make good business sense, that it would be too
2 expensive and isn't profitable. Here are some
3 other things that aren't profitable by traditional
4 metrics: Schools, churches, fire departments, and
5 parks, courts and local governments and nonprofit
6 service organizations. But all of these are
7 investments in our community and investments in
8 people.

9 Certainly, there are the financial
10 resources to keep this part of the hospital open
11 if leadership makes the moral choice to do so.
12 But when profits are more important than caring
13 for our neighbors, we all lose. I want to live in
14 the kind of city where we prioritize the health
15 and well-being of one another over profit margins.

16 And I join so many here today in asking
17 you to require that the hospital keep these
18 services in the neighborhood. If Mercy Health
19 isn't going to make the moral choice to invest
20 equitably in neighborhoods, then the state needs
21 to make that choice for them.

22 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Eric Lemon Home.

23 MR. MITCHELL: That name is not on the
24 list.

1 MS. SIMMONS: Okay. Again, if you are a
2 call-in user, please raise your hand by dialing
3 star 3. Let's go to Timothy Williams.

4 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, indeed. Good
5 afternoon. I just wanted to say a few important
6 things, where everything's mostly been said.
7 Opposing this shutting down everything on Rockton
8 Avenue said some good things, very true, very
9 meaningful to our community, to our county.

10 I just want you to know that I know of a
11 gentleman within the past year, he ended up
12 falling on the floor at his home and taken to a
13 nursing home for rehab. Severe heart problems.
14 While when he was in this nursing home, which is
15 right across the street from the Rockton Avenue
16 location, they had to pass his house up to take
17 him out to Riverside to the ER because of his
18 heart condition. That makes no sense. He could
19 have went right across the street. They probably
20 could have walked him over there.

21 But the other thing is, when Mercy finally
22 got their approval to build way out Riverside, it
23 was all good. But not too long after that, they
24 ended up needing more funding. To me, right then

1 and there, they should have shut the whole
2 operation down, probably building in Riverside
3 because they was lying in the first place.

4 You can't do that paperwork, set the
5 master plan, and then all of a sudden end up short
6 on cash. Somebody didn't do something right. I
7 just wanted to say that. And west side, south
8 side we got to do something to make things more
9 prosperous and equal throughout the whole city.
10 Thank you.

11 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you, sir. Next, Debra
12 Whinnery. You are unmuted.

13 MS. WHINNERY: Yes. Can you hear me?

14 MS. SIMMONS: Yes, we can.

15 MS. WHINNERY: Okay. My name is Debra
16 Whinnery. W-H-I-N-N-E-R-Y. Most of what I have
17 said has already been said. But I hope the Board
18 will consider not profits but lives, the quality
19 of life of the people on the west side. The
20 people that are disproportionately affected are
21 people that are vulnerable and minority
22 populations. To me, this is not profits. It's
23 not a problem with staffing, specialists. It's a
24 problem of systemic racism. And in our current

1 culture of trying to be more equitable, I think
2 Mercy Health needs to consider that. Thank you.

3 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Gary Anderson.

4 MR. MITCHELL: I think we already had
5 Mr. Anderson.

6 MS. SIMMONS: Did we? Okay. Henry
7 Hamberlin. You are unmuted.

8 MR. HAMBERLIN: Can you hear me?

9 MS. SIMMONS: Yes, we can. Please
10 proceed.

11 MR. HAMBERLIN: Thank you. Thank you. My
12 name is Henry Hamberlin. H-E-N-R-Y.
13 H-A-M-B-E-R-L-I-N. And I -- I was born in -- I
14 was born in Rockford. I was born in downtown
15 Rockford.

16 But I just want to say that, you know,
17 there's so much -- there's so much -- so much
18 negativity toward the west side because we had --
19 we had -- we've gone through the people care
20 lawsuit, we've gone through services and goods
21 disappearing on the west side of Rockford, and it
22 just continues.

23 West -- West High School's closed, you
24 know, now Rockford Memorial -- the services

1 diminishing at Rockford Memorial are ridiculous.
2 And I tell you, I was born in Rockford, but I, you
3 know, still live here on the west side of town,
4 and I haven't forgotten it. And I know Javon said
5 he's -- yeah, he's dedicated to Rockford. But I
6 don't know. It just seems like why would you take
7 -- why would you take one of the most important
8 things in Rockford like Rockford Memorial and just
9 basically diminish the goods and services.

10 Because like a lot of people said, takes
11 quite a bit of time to get out to the east side to
12 all the other three hospitals. And with this
13 pandemic, it just seems like a lot of -- you know,
14 a lot of the hospitals are filled up. And where
15 Rockford Memorial could be a very big piece in
16 solving everything in our region and in Rockford
17 if, you know, the promises that Mercy and Javon
18 put to us, like a lot of people said, they were
19 going to -- they wanted the subsidy and they were
20 going to move -- they were going to take this off
21 the table for Rockford if we, the taxpayers,
22 through the city council and the mayor didn't give
23 them the subsidy to build the new hospital out on
24 Riverside. I remember that. I remember it as

1 clear as day.

2 So that's all I wanted to say. And I -- I
3 deeply appreciate the Mayor and Representative
4 West and Stadelman and Mrs. Hervey and all the
5 people speaking up. Don't -- don't be afraid to
6 speak up for Rockford and the west side and
7 Rockford as a whole.

8 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

9 MR. HAMBERLIN: Thank you very much.

10 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Dr. Patricia
11 Home.

12 MR. MITCHELL: Dr. Holm, you can proceed.

13 MS. SIMMONS: Dr. Holm, you are unmuted.
14 Okay. Well, let's come back to her, Mitch. Do
15 you see Jackie Hickey?

16 MR. MITCHELL: No, I do not.

17 MS. SIMMONS: Okay. Titus Hou.

18 MR. HOU: Hi. Can everyone hear me?

19 MS. SIMMONS: Yes, we can. Please
20 proceed.

21 MR. HOU: Good afternoon. I thank the
22 HFSRB for having this public hearing on this
23 important issue.

24 My name is Titus Hou, and I'm representing

1 my personal views and statement. I'm calling in
2 from Baltimore, Maryland where I'm pursuing a
3 master's of public health, which I've chosen to
4 pursue inspired by my interactions with
5 Rockfordians. And I will return in May to
6 complete my medical education.

7 Excluding the past six months living in
8 Baltimore, I've lived my entire life in Illinois
9 and Iowa and was recently reminded of home during
10 my haircut today when the barber mentioned how
11 nice the people they met were while traveling the
12 heartland.

13 Our down-to-earth, neighborly way of
14 caring for one another and strangers, our midwest
15 nice, it stands out. It's with this reminder in
16 mind that I sadly speak in opposition to Mercy
17 Health's further reduction in services at the
18 Rockton Campus.

19 As a medical student, much of my role is
20 conversing with patients and studying medicine.
21 Over the past three years of volunteering in the
22 community learning from Rockfordians, including at
23 Rockton Hospital, I've heard numerous opinions
24 about Mercy Health. Some cite positives, but most

1 are negative.

2 Today, we hear an overwhelming majority of
3 speakers explaining the crucial role the hospital
4 plays and the harmful impact changes will bring to
5 the community. Recent history shows indifference
6 to these voices. Mercy Health speaks of
7 efficiency, forcing over 65,000 people residing
8 closest to Mercy Rockton to move several miles for
9 health care is surely the opposite of efficiency,
10 and certainly not midwest nice.

11 I urge local leaders, both political and
12 health care, to work with the community to find
13 solutions that promote healthy communities.
14 Anything less is an erosion of the shared value
15 that distinguishes us from the rest of the world.
16 Thank you.

17 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. I am coming to
18 the end of my list. And so I want to repeat for
19 anyone that I have not yet called or I have called
20 and not gone back to your name, if you can please
21 raise your hand and indicate that you would like
22 to speak. Or if you are a call-in user, please
23 dial star 3.

24 Again, we're going to go back, Mitch, to

1 Dr. Holm and see if her mic is working now. You
2 are unmuted, Dr. Holm. Okay. Well, let's -- I
3 see that there's a call-in user with a hand
4 raised. If he can go to that individual and
5 unmute. You are unmuted, call-in user 35.

6 DR. HOLM: Hello, this is Dr. Holm.

7 MS. SIMMONS: There you go. Yes. Please
8 proceed.

9 DR. HOLM: Can you hear me?

10 MS. SIMMONS: Yes, we can. Thank you.

11 DR. HOLM: Okay. Sorry. I don't know
12 what was happening. So, Dr. Patricia Holm.
13 P-A-T-R-I-C-I-A. Last name, H-O-L-M.

14 I am a veterinarian of almost 40 years and
15 a business owner on the west side. Myself and my
16 long-time employee of 18 years, Jackie Hickey, are
17 attending this hearing, and she has been a west
18 sider for a long, long time.

19 It is very important to me as a business
20 owner and frontline health care worker, even
21 though it's in the animal business, that my
22 clientele and my neighbors are taken care of and
23 that things aren't taken away from us here.

24 So I am asking to work against the request

1 for that application that is being set forth.

2 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Again, I'm at
3 the end of the list of my previously registered
4 speakers. If there's anyone else that wishes to
5 speak at this time, please indicate by raising
6 your hand or dialing star 3.

7 MR. MITCHELL: We just had another --
8 another question, actually. I don't know if they
9 wish to speak or not.

10 MS. SIMMONS: Mitch, I'm having difficulty
11 seeing these questions.

12 MR. MITCHELL: Sylvia Baker, did you wish
13 to speak?

14 MS. BAKER: Yes.

15 MS. SIMMONS: Okay. If you -- please
16 proceed.

17 MS. BAKER: Thank you very much. My name
18 is Sylvia Baker. S-Y-L-V-I-A. B-A-K-E-R. I am a
19 previous employee of Rockford Memorial Hospital
20 and I also transitioned into employment when Mercy
21 Health took Rockford Memorial Hospital -- Rockford
22 Health System over. I've been a long-term
23 employee. I had worked for the business for 43
24 years before I left.

1 And the reason that I left was because I
2 couldn't continue to live with the moral dilemma
3 that I was seeing in what I was trying to tell
4 people and what I was seeing going on in the
5 community.

6 My concern for closing down the Rockton
7 Avenue facility -- and I understand the
8 difficulties of staffing and providing equal
9 services when there are limited people to be able
10 to do that. But my concern is with the western
11 Winnebago County, the counties of Stephenson
12 County, Ogle County who used to send patients to
13 Rockford Memorial Hospital or Rockford Health
14 System and got high level quality care. Those
15 people now no longer have that availability to be
16 able to get the health care that they so richly
17 deserved.

18 Aside from that, I would like to thank
19 everybody for allowing this opportunity for us to
20 be able to voice our concerns and our opinions.
21 And I would also like to thank all of those who
22 continue to work not just within Mercy Health but
23 throughout health care and taking care of patients
24 and providing as safe care as possible to them.

1 Thank you very much.

2 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Are there any --
3 is there anyone else that wishes to speak at this
4 time? Please indicate by raising your hand or
5 dialing star 3. Aprel Prunty.

6 MS. PRUNTY: Thank you. And Aprel Prunty.
7 A-P-R-E-L. Prunty, P-R-U-N-T-Y.

8 I just want to echo what so many of the
9 callers have had to say. That hospital -- I was
10 born at Rockford Memorial Hospital. I could tell
11 you that it really concerns me to see all of the
12 services depleted. I work over -- I'm a teacher
13 for Rockford Public Schools, and I work at
14 Roosevelt Community Education Center. And things
15 have happened in our area. And it just troubles
16 me to think that when things happen on the west
17 side that people have to travel so far to get
18 services.

19 My mother uses another hospital, and I can
20 tell you that it's just so packed. And it's
21 almost unfair what people are having to experience
22 just to get service -- health care services in
23 this -- in the Rockford community.

24 I really would hope that we would do all

1 that we can so that we can provide better service
2 for the people on all sides of the town. Not
3 everybody who needs the services are necessarily
4 -- anyways. Excuse me.

5 Please continue to do all that we can for
6 the people on all sides of town, including --
7 especially the west side. I think that the
8 services are needed. I think that it's too
9 crowded in some of the other areas and we are left
10 vulnerable because of the lack of services.

11 Thank you for the opportunity to speak and
12 thank you for hosting this event. I have been
13 listening the entire time and I really -- I
14 appreciate what everyone has had to say.

15 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you.

16 THE REPORTER: April, this is the court
17 reporter.

18 MS. SIMMONS: Yes, Court? Court, did you
19 have a question?

20 THE REPORTER: I think we lost Ms. Prunty.

21 MS. SIMMONS: You did not hear her?

22 THE REPORTER: I didn't hear the end. But
23 I can get it from the recording. But I hear you
24 now.

1 MS. SIMMONS: Okay. Okay. You scared me
2 for a second. Okay. Is there any -- Mitch, do
3 you see any -- and any new individuals that may
4 have popped up that I can't see for whatever
5 reason, the hand raising is really dark on my
6 screen. Is there anyone that I may have missed?

7 MR. MITCHELL: We have a Mike Kennedy that
8 had a question earlier. Does Mr. Kennedy wish to
9 speak?

10 MR. SILBERMAN: Thank you. My name is
11 Mark. M-A-R-K. Silberman. S-I-L-B-E-R-M-A-N.
12 And I want to just take this opportunity to thank
13 the members of the Board, to thank the members of
14 the staff and to thank the members of the public
15 that offered testimony here today.

16 We really do appreciate the degree of
17 interest that was presented regarding this project
18 and the interest that it reflects regarding access
19 to care for the greater Rockford community.

20 We do want to take this opportunity to
21 address head on the comments suggesting that this
22 project is intended to cease the provision of
23 carat Rockton Avenue. This is simply not true.
24 The time that Mercy has spent planning, the money

1 that it has invested, the options that are being
2 explored, all of these things demonstrate there is
3 no interest in stopping the provision of care of
4 Rockton Avenue.

5 Have plans changed since 2015? Since
6 2017? Since 2019? Of course they have. But in
7 that time, the world has changed too. And along
8 with it so has the delivery of health care.

9 The current plan retains 50 physicians,
10 including those that provide essential
11 preventative services; oncology, pain management,
12 outpatient OR procedure suites, orthopedic
13 services, urgent care, but we would ask that
14 everyone please understand everything that is
15 being considered, everything that was presented
16 today, whatever it is the future holds, it is
17 designed and intended to ensure stability. And it
18 is being done with the purpose of ensuring
19 continued access to health care at Rockton Avenue,
20 not to shutting it down.

21 And with that, I want to thank everyone
22 for their time today and thank the Board for its
23 consideration of this project.

24 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. Just to be sure,

1 Mitch, do you see -- do you see any additional
2 names that have -- I have not called that wish to
3 speak at this time? I do not see any.

4 MR. MITCHELL: No. I don't believe so.
5 So the only two people -- I have two people with
6 their hands raised but that's Timothy Williams and
7 Valeri DeCastris, and I believe we already called
8 on them.

9 MS. SIMMONS: Okay. Thank you. Please
10 note that this project is tentatively scheduled
11 for consideration by the Board at its March 15,
12 2022 meeting. The State Board meeting will be
13 held virtually beginning at 9:00 a.m. Please
14 refer to the State Board's website for the link to
15 the State Board meeting.

16 The public has until -- on February 23rd
17 of 2022 to submit signed written comments
18 pertaining to this project. Comments should be
19 sent to the attention of April Simmons, general
20 counsel, Illinois Health Facilities and Services
21 Review Board, 525 West Jefferson Street, Second
22 Floor, Springfield, Illinois 62761. The State
23 Board will post its findings in a State Board
24 staff report. This report will be made available

1 on Tuesday, March 1st, 2022.

2 The public may submit written responses to
3 errors in the findings of the Board's staff to the
4 Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review
5 Board. The public will have until 9:00 a.m. on
6 March 7th, 2022, to submit written responses to
7 the content of the report findings.

8 The aforementioned report and additional
9 information can be assessed on the Board's
10 website. Are there any questions regarding what I
11 stated? If you have any questions, please
12 place --

13 MR. MITCHELL: April?

14 MS. SIMMONS: Yes.

15 MR. MITCHELL: We have a comment from
16 Valeri DeCastris that she wished to speak on
17 behalf of another organization in addition to her
18 previous comments, I assume.

19 MS. SIMMONS: Okay. Okay. Please unmute
20 her.

21 MS. DECASTRIS: Thank you. Can you hear
22 me? I'll be brief. I won't take two minutes.

23 MS. SIMMONS: Yes. We can hear you.
24 Please proceed.

1 MS. DECASTRIS: Thank you. I'm sorry if
2 that wasn't clear. I'm speaking on behalf of
3 Southwest Ideas for Today and Tomorrow,
4 Incorporated, better known as SWIFT, Incorporated.
5 This is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit community
6 economic development advocacy organization for the
7 southwest quadrant of Rockford. I was its first
8 executive director in 1996, and I continue to be
9 on the board of directors for the organization.

10 I would like to go on record on behalf of
11 SWIFT to oppose any diminution of services at the
12 Rockton Campus of Mercy Health. The organization
13 originally opposed the cessation of a level I
14 trauma center moving a half hour east to the
15 Riverside Campus.

16 We are principally concerned with the
17 revitalization and business development and
18 neighborhood development of the southwest
19 quadrant, however, the northwest quadrant of
20 Rockford deserves our attention as well and does,
21 indeed, receive our concern.

22 There has been an incredible amount of
23 disinvestment in that neighborhood. Crime is up.
24 Numerous doctors have left that campus and gone to

1 other campuses, numerous nurses and staff have
2 left. The morale is terrible. People talk all
3 the time about how they're not happy at Mercy
4 Health and/or have left. And there seems to be a
5 systemic problem there.

6 And the promises that were made by Javon
7 Bea have not been kept and we refuse to believe
8 that this is a health care issue. It is an equity
9 issue --

10 MR. ROATE: Two minutes.

11 MS. DECASTRIS: -- and it is a moral
12 responsibility of this hospital to retain or
13 enhance services there. Thank you for letting me
14 speak again on behalf of that organization.

15 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. I want to repeat
16 to make sure that if anyone wants to address any
17 of the concerns in the State Board staff report,
18 that timeline, the report will be made available
19 on Tuesday, March 1st, and the public may be able
20 to submit any written responses to the errors of
21 that staff report up until the March 7th at
22 9:00 a.m.

23 And that can be submitted to the Illinois
24 Health Facilities and Services Review Board, 525

1 West Jefferson Street, Second Floor, Springfield,
2 Illinois. Seeing that -- and, additionally, the
3 transcript for this -- this hearing will be posted
4 on the website.

5 Seeing that there are no additional
6 questions or comments, I deem this public hearing
7 adjourned. Thank you for participating in today's
8 proceeding.

9 (Off the record at 3:54 p.m.)

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1 CERTIFICATE OF SHORTHAND REPORTER - NOTARY PUBLIC

2

3 I, Courtney Petros, Registered
4 Professional Reporter, Certified Shorthand
5 Reporter and Notary Public, the officer before
6 whom the foregoing proceeding was taken, do hereby
7 certify that the foregoing transcript is a true
8 and correct record of the testimony given; that
9 said testimony was taken by me and thereafter
10 reduced to typewriting under my direction; that
11 reading and signing was not requested; and that I
12 am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed
13 by any of the parties to this case and have no
14 interest, financial or otherwise, in its outcome.

15 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto signed
16 this 3rd day of February, 2022.

17 My commission expires May 6th, 2023.

18

19



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COURTNEY PETROS, RPR, CSR

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NOTARY PUBLIC IN AND FOR THE

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STATE OF ILLINOIS

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