

From: [PK Hendrickson](#)
To: [DPH.HFSRB.PublicHearings](#)
Cc: [Thomas McNamara](#)
Subject: [External] Javon Bea MercyHealth closures hearing
Date: Wednesday, January 12, 2022 12:36:50 PM

January 12, 2022

To: Illinois Health Facilities and Service Review Board

Re: Additional Closures at JavonBea MercyHealth Rockton Avenue Campus

Review Board Members:

Since the hearing about Javon Bea MercyHealth's request to close inpatient services at its Rockton Avenue campus will be held in the middle of a work day, I opted to voice my concerns via email.

Prior to being acquired by MercyHealth, the large complex at 2400 N. Rockton Avenue was known as Rockford Memorial Hospital, it was a full-service hospital with nearly 400 beds. Although greatly reduced in size, it remains the only hospital on the west side of Rockford, Illinois.

Since the acquisition, MercyHealth and its president and CEO, Javon Bea, built a new women's and children's hospital on East Riverside, literally the farthest northeast corner of Rockford (a wealthier area than the west side), on the promise that the Rockton Avenue campus would remain a vital part of its organization. MercyHealth received numerous tax cuts and incentives to subsidize the costs of building the new 563,000 square foot, 194-bed facility (stats are from the MercyHealth website; Healthcare Report Card says it has 188 beds—84 medical-surgical, 26 ICU, 12 pediatric, 20 OB/Gyn, and 46 neonatal ICU).

<http://www.healthcarereportcard.illinois.gov/hospitals/view/12561700>

In April, 2020, Javon Bea MercyHealth—which is a not-for-profit organization—announced it would no longer accept IlliniCare, Meridian, and Molina coverage. Those are all branded names for Medicaid. https://www.wrex.com/news/mercyhealth-to-no-longer-accept-illinicare-meridian-molina-and-bcbs-medicaid-patients-in-effort-to/article_5eb94126-a070-53bc-8c4a-d2a6c55fbfc8.html

In August, 2020, Javon Bea MercyHealth closed its 20-bed mental health unit—without a public hearing—claiming there were already plenty of mental health beds in Rockford. (Yet last year, when a friend's son had two psychological breakdowns, he had to be transferred to a hospital in the Chicago suburbs, and later to another one in Chicago because there is a shortage of psychiatric beds in Rockford.)

<https://www.rrstar.com/story/news/politics/county/2020/08/19/mercyhealth-closes-rockford-mental-health-unit-without-public-hearing-state-approval/114356846/>

The same month, Javon Bea MercyHealth announced it was cutting emergency services at its Rockton Avenue campus (Bea himself blamed it on the pandemic, yet felt the need to add that Rockford already has “enough” trauma centers). https://www.wrex.com/news/mercyhealth-to-stop-providing-inpatient-services-at-rockton-ave-hospital/article_c0d09ab6-4d37-11ec-821a-e77ef5404e14.html

In November, 2021, Javon Bea MercyHealth announced plans to close the Rockton Avenue campus' 70-bed medical surgical unit, leaving the vast majority of Rockford citizens asking, "What medical services do they still provide?" My older cousin lives near the Rockton Avenue campus, but her cardiologist was moved to the Riverside campus, which has created an unnecessary burden for her every time she needs to see him.

<https://www.wifr.com/2021/11/24/mercyhealth-shuffles-patient-services-inpatient-riverside-campus-outpatient-rockton-campus/>

According to Healthcare Report Card, the Rockton Avenue campus is currently down to 91 total beds, 70 of which are listed as medical-surgical beds. Eliminating the 70-bed medical-surgical unit would leave just 21 beds in the massive complex—4 of which are ICU beds while the other 17 are long-term care, which sounds more like a nursing home than a hospital.

<http://www.healthcarereportcard.illinois.gov/hospitals/view/101271>

It is obvious that Javon Bea and MercyHealth have been disingenuous from the start. The Rockton Avenue campus has been systematically destroyed from the inside out, largely because serving the public—and thousands of Medicaid patients—isn't as profitable as turning what was sold to us a women's and children's hospital into a full-service hospital (for the wealthy only), and dumping expensive traumas and un- and under-insured patients on UW SwedishAmerican and OSF St. Anthony, both of which are currently stretched beyond capacity with COVID patients in addition to regular and trauma patients while Javon Bea MercyHealth's large Rockton Avenue campus languishes. Perhaps MercyHealth should turn all that empty space into a COVID unit. https://www.wrex.com/coronavirus/uw-healths-swedishamerican-hospital-out-of-icu-beds/article_a538e568-72f5-11ec-9b27-c38bbc0b62af.html

If Javon Bea MercyHealth continues to dismantle its Rockton Avenue campus, the entire organization should be stripped of its not-for-profit status and be compelled to pay local, state, and federal taxes on every penny of profit generated from its patients retroactive to the day its Riverside campus opened.

Please do not allow Javon Bea MercyHealth to continue its mission of putting profits over patients and thereby harming the communities it supposedly serves.

Respectfully,

Paula Hendrickson

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CC: Mayor Thomas McNamara, Rockford IL