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**KAM BUCKNER**  
STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
26TH HOUSE DISTRICT

September 13, 2023

Mr. David Fox, Ms. Sandra Martell and Members  
Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board  
525 W. Jefferson Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Springfield, IL 62761

**RE: Springfield Clinic – Springfield Clinic Ambulatory Surgery Center Establishment of Cardiac Catheterization: Letter of Opposition**

Dear Mr. Fox, Ms. Martell and Members of the Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board:

I reach out to you today on a matter of concern. As you know, the ability to readily access health care often eludes people of color. In our communities, too often we find inferior care is the norm. I am writing to you to express my strong opposition to Springfield Clinic's Certificate of Need ("CON") application to establish cardiac catheterizations at the Springfield Clinic Ambulatory Surgery Center. It is my belief that, if approved, this project will lead to substandard care and increased health disparities for our communities.

While a cardiac catheterization is a common procedure used to diagnose or treat heart problems, it does not come without risk. Heart attacks, strokes, bleeding, and blood clots are just some of the complications that could arise with the procedure. These risks are why cardiac catheterizations should be performed in a supervised hospital setting where resources are available to minimize the opportunity for them to become major complications, unlike an ambulatory surgery setting.

In addition to this increased chance for patient harm, the approval of this project would also worsen health disparities among people of color and marginalized groups. As you are probably aware, Medicaid is the public health insurance program funding health care for low-income families. It is estimated that 26% of all Illinois residents are covered by Medicaid, and almost 86% of those covered are people of color.

I was an active proponent and supporter of a key historic piece of legislation and 2021 state law known as the "Healthcare Transformation Collaborative Public Act". The historic, equity-driven Healthcare Transformation Collaboratives are designed to create partnerships and bring entities together to find innovative ways to bridge gaps in the healthcare delivery system and increase access to quality healthcare services in underserved communities across Illinois. Put bluntly, I feel approving Springfield Clinic's request for cardiac catheterization services clearly undermines our state's significant efforts to address health equity based upon Springfield Clinic's

historical intentional avoidance of Medicaid patients. We as a state would be rewarding the exact behavior we are trying to prevent and undermines the health of our underserved communities.

Yet, Springfield Clinic's CON application clearly states patients covered by Medicaid comprise only 5% of their total cardiology visits. Unlike our Illinois hospitals, which provide billions of dollars in true charity care annually and take care of all patients regardless of their ability to pay, Springfield Clinic provides no charity care. In fact, the Safety Net Impact Statement in the application highlights that payment plans would be necessary for those not covered under a third-party insurance plan. Simply put, the increased patient access referenced in several letters of support for this project will not be gained by the Medicaid or uninsured population. Instead, the for-profit Springfield Clinic will redirect commercially insured patients from hospitals well-equipped and most capable to safely provide this service – the same hospitals demonstrating stalwart support and service to their communities before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is time to tackle the health inequities and health disparities in our communities and approval of a project like this will only further the gap we are trying to close. I trust and believe that the Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board prioritizes equity, fairness, and quality of care for patients when making decisions that impact the health and well-being of Illinois residents. Accordingly, I encourage you to oppose Springfield Clinic's request for cardiac catheterization services, project #22-027.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kam Buckner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kam Buckner  
Illinois House of State Representatives  
26th District