

June 11, 2024

Debra Savage, Chairwoman
Illinois Health Facilities & Services Review Board
525 West Jefferson, 2nd Floor
Springfield, IL 62761

Re: Opposition letter for OSF St. Elizabeth Medical Center
Replacement Hospital CON Project #24-011

I am writing this letter to oppose OSF's healthcare plan due to the proposed elimination and reduction of services in the Ottawa area. It is very disheartening and difficult to understand why services are being reduced when the hospital has been at full capacity for over six months, necessitating the transfer of patients to other hospitals due to a lack of beds.

There are many reasons why I am against reducing services at OSF Ottawa. However, I am choosing to focus on one because of a personal experience. In recent months, my husband has been in the emergency room three times and admitted as an inpatient twice. It was comforting to be able to visit him in the hospital while still tending to our children's needs in Ottawa. Unfortunately, the last time we were in the emergency room and my husband needed to be admitted, we were told he might be transferred to Rockford or Bloomington. It was unbelievably stressful and disheartening, adding more anxiety to an already stressful situation. I began to cry, overwhelmed by thoughts of how I would manage my children's needs, what if something happened to my husband during the transfer, where I would stay for the night, and how I would drive over an hour at night by myself when I was already exhausted. This contradicts OSF's mission statement, which emphasizes providing the greatest care and love, with the patient experience being the top priority.

Reflecting on the situation, I wondered what would happen if I had to travel in adverse weather conditions such as an ice storm, snowstorm, thunderstorms, or tornado conditions. Elderly people who can't travel and are separated from their spouses, as well as those who can't afford the financial burden of staying in a hotel, would face significant challenges.

In conclusion, there are numerous reasons why OSF should not reduce services in Ottawa. I have only touched on one aspect because it affected me personally. I strongly urge OSF to reconsider their proposed plan and respectfully request that OSF provides the Ottawa area with the full hospital services it deserves. Our community depends on the quality local care they have always had access to.

Respectfully,

Sally S. Cooper