

RECEIVED

JUN 17 2024

HEALTH FACILITIES &
SERVICES REVIEW BOARD

June 10, 2024

Debra Savage. Chairwoman
Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board
525 West Jefferson, 2nd floor
Springfield, Illinois 62761

Re: Opposition Letter for OSF St. Elizabeth Medical Center –
replacement hospital (CON Project # 24 – 011)

Dear Ms. Savage,

This letter is an urgent request to contest the OSF Saint Elizabeth Medical Center proposed project. My late husband and I lived in Ottawa, Illinois from 2000 – 2015 and benefited many times from the full services available at what was formerly known as CHO, the Community Hospital of Ottawa.

As a pulmonary patient, he received emergency care on a number of occasions before we moved back to the Chicago suburbs. Our grown Chicago children felt confident about leaving their children with us in a rural area because we prevailed upon OSF Saint Elizabeth's several times for late night stitches, high fever intervention and a variety of other potentially serious maladies, usually after hours.

Ottawa is no different from any community of 16,000 people, in that an endless number of medical interventions can be needed at any time. Babies need to be delivered, and post-partum services have to be provided. An infinite number of medical specialty practices needs to be offered, and local citizens need to feel valued as patients who can benefit from those multiple services *close to home*.

I am particularly concerned about the proposed lack of ICU services for Ottawa residents. Most of my friends are part of what we call an "aging population." What can they expect in terms of Critical Care when they

are in need of immediate intervention? The concept of transporting a patient in crisis to Peru, IL, is reckless and fraught with possible complications. The intent to downsize the number of medical/surgical beds from 54 to only 12 is downright dangerous to the Ottawa citizens.

As a retired teacher, I also worry about the loss of tax revenue and how would that affect the budget for the school district. Would hiring for Ottawa Township High School and Ottawa ESD 141 be competitive if prospective employees knew the efforts to which they would have to go to receive complete healthcare services? Would funding for crucial school services and availability of the best possible curriculum materials - consistent with providing a best possible public education - be compromised? More importantly, would our precious children even be afforded the full medical services to which they are entitled in the event of a sports injury or school accident?

And what about the jobs that would be lost if this proposal was enacted? Ottawa has a significant population of medical professionals who are employed at OSF St. Elizabeth's. Those residents shop for goods and services in the Ottawa area. They buy houses in the area. Adoption of the proposal would result in decreased revenue.

Please reject the proposal to make Saint Margaret's Hospital in Peru the new hub for the La Salle County residents. Ottawa and its surrounding area are entitled to better healthcare than that.

Thank you.

Patricia Powell Brown

Formerly of 2835 Emerald Drive in Ottawa, Illinois 61350

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patricia Powell Brown". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

6/12/24

IL Health Facilities & Services Review Board

Attn: Debra Savage, Chairwoman

525 West Jefferson, 2nd Floor

Springfield, IL 62761

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**HEALTH FACILITIES &
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Dear Chairwoman:

I am writing you in opposition of OSF's plans to discontinue services at St. Elizabeth Medical Center in Ottawa, IL, and in opposition of OSF's plans to demolish the hospital and build a newer, smaller facility that greatly reduces access to inpatient hospital services. The reduction by 78% of medical/surgical beds, elimination of ICU beds and OB unit facilities is of great concern to our community and smaller towns who depend on our local hospital now and increasingly in the future.

My husband and I are seniors who have relied on our local hospital and medical facilities for our care. In addition, we have many family and friends living within 10-25 miles of Ottawa's OSF who also rely on our hospital and medical facilities for what, in the past, has been good medical help. It will be a hardship for all of us to have fewer services and have to be transported elsewhere when we might have serious or life-threatening issues. It will also add to the wait time and availability of services at other facilities.

Please vote against OSF's plans to replace our hospital with a smaller facility and very limited resources.

We hope OSF will take the time to rethink their plans and realize they are doing a disservice to our community. When OSF took over our local hospital, we hoped for even better services, not a reduction in health care.

Thank you,

Barbara and Quentin Cooper

Barbara & Quentin Cooper

2504 E. 1704th Rd.

Ottawa, IL 61350

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**HEALTH FACILITIES &
SERVICES REVIEW BOARD**

June 15, 2024

Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board
525 W. Jefferson St. Second Floor
Springfield, IL 62761

Dear Review Board,

I am writing to protest the OSF plan to decrease services at St. Elizabeth Medical Center in Ottawa. I recently retired as a nurse practitioner from OSF after starting in the medical field in 1973. I have been a resident of Ottawa IL. for the past 48 years.

Ottawa is the largest city in our area with many surrounding smaller towns who rely on us for their healthcare. In my personal experience, it is a hardship for many families to have to travel for their care, especially when they are ill and in harsh winter weather. OSF's plan proposes Peru as a central hub for the "I 80 region". That term, "I 80 region" is strictly OSF terminology. It is not an entity; it does not exist outside of OSF's monopoly. Apparently, an injunction has been filed with the justice department complaining that OSF is a monopoly in our area.

Ottawa is the furthest east in OSF's territory, other than their site in Escanaba, Michigan (which is related to the history of the religious order). My opinion is that they want to invest less in Ottawa, as they feel it is most vulnerable to Chicago influences. Morris Hospital already has offices on the St. Elizabeth campus in Ottawa.

OSF recently purchased the bankrupt Peru hospital, which is great for the LaSalle-Peru community. I grew up there and have family and friends living in LaSalle-Peru. This is not an "us against them situation". But the Ottawa community GAVE OSF our hospital 12 years ago with the expectation for bigger and better services, not a substantial decrease in services for the entire area east of Route 39 to Morris. This was not the vision for our future.

The current plan is to decrease our 99 bed hospital to 38 beds, of which 26 will remain mental health. How many of these mental health patients reside out of town, yet will require our police department often for intervention. Our tax dollars support these services, and as the chief of police has reported, services are then inadequate to safely patrol our own community. Ambulance services will also be tied up due to the need to transfer so many patients to Peru.

Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board
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54 inpatient beds reduced to 12?! As OSF physician, Dr. Cruz has reported, many of the mental health patients have dual diagnoses. Many will require medical detoxification or even ICU services prior to commitment. This may potentially tie up the majority of the 12 medical beds. No ICU beds!! How many people will suffer poor outcomes, possibly death, due to a lack of critical care services and the need to transfer the critical patients to an entirely different town.

Their plan involves reducing the surgical rooms from 5 to 2. No after hour surgeries or week-end surgeries will be performed. I myself have undergone an emergency surgery 10 years ago. The time between the realization of the need for surgery and when I was taken to surgery was 20 minutes. What would my outcome have been if I had needed to transfer to another facility? If a patient is successfully resuscitated from a cardiac arrest, but is unstable-we will have no ICU. They may not survive the delay in care.

How much is the payer mix to blame for these plans? What about recruitment? It is already difficult to entice new providers to rural areas, but who will want to come to a town with a 12 bed hospital?

OSF did not discuss these plans with the city prior to releasing them to the public. Instead, the city was given the plans 2 hours prior to the announcement.

The Ottawa hospital was built 50 years ago. 50 years from now, Ottawa will look very different. Chicago suburbs may be at our eastern door, as evidenced by what was farmland between here and Chicago 50 years ago, but is now sprawling suburbs.

The bottom line is, OSF's proposal, as it is currently written, does not meet Ottawa's current or future needs. We ask that you please deny their current proposal for the health and welfare of all the citizens in our community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mary Twardowski
1913 Fremont Place
Ottawa, IL 61350

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

June 4, 2024

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**HEALTH FACILITIES &
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IL Health Facilities & Services Review Board
Attn: Debra Savage, Chairwoman
525 West Jefferson, 2nd Floor
Springfield, IL 62761

RE: Opposition Letter for OSF St. Elizabeth Medical Center – Replacement hospital (CON Project #24-011); & Opposition Letter for OSF St. Elizabeth Medical Center – Discontinuation of facility (CON Project #24-013)

Dear Chairwoman:

I am writing to you in opposition of OSF's plans to discontinue services at St. Elizabeth Medical Center ("SEMC") in Ottawa, and in opposition of OSF's plans to demolish the hospital and build a newer, smaller facility that greatly reduces access to inpatient hospital services. Ottawa has had a full-service community hospital since 1895 and it's taken only 12 years for OSF to try and dismantle what we've built here for more than a century.

In 1895 a hospital was gifted to the city of Ottawa by a grieving widow in honor of her late husband, a local physician. In 1969 a local foundation donated 30 acres of land along the beautiful Fox River to build a new hospital; numerous individual and local corporate donations were collected to build the facility and ground was broken in 1971; the hospital was operational by 1974. In 1985 more land adjacent to the hospital was donated and multiple outpatient facilities were built. The hospital's board of directors were distinguished members of the community. The hospital is currently 99 beds in size (54 medical/surgical; 5 intensive care; 14 OB/delivery; and 26 acute mental illness).

Following years of partnership with OSF through the stroke network, Ottawa signed an LOI in 2010 to merge with OSF; and the deal was finalized in 2012 (See 2012's Certificate of Exemption Application E-001-12 for more detail). **OSF paid no purchase price for the hospital's assets (including the land), but the valuation at the time was \$58 million.**

In early 2023, two hospitals out of the five remaining in our planning region C-02 closed abruptly; one in Peru (49 beds) and one Spring Valley (44 beds) - both part of the now defunct SMP health system. In July 2023 OSF purchased the closed Peru hospital for \$38 million, **making OSF the only provider of hospital services in planning region C-02; a monopoly created *seemingly* by happenstance.**

In March 2024, OSF announced plans to build a new hospital in Ottawa and demolish the one built in the 70s. The new hospital would keep 26 mental health beds; but the 5-bed ICU and 14-bed OB units would be eliminated; and only 12 med/surg beds would remain (a 78% reduction from the 54 it has today). In stark contrast, OSF shared plans to re-open Peru's once shuttered hospital as the system's new inpatient hub on I-80, and increase the number of beds. **Even with OSF re-opening the Peru hospital with an increase in beds, the severe reduction planned for SEMC-Ottawa still leaves the C-02 region short 24 med/surg beds and 2 OB beds, and will place all ICU beds West of I-39 - leaving a gaping hole in access in LaSalle County.**

Confusing things even further is the fact that SEMC recently received an "A" rating from Leapfrog Group - a leader in providing transparency around patient safety and quality metrics. This puts them in the same company as University of Chicago Medical Center, Rush University Medical Center, Northwestern Central DuPage, Elmhurst Hospital and Silver Cross Hospital, among others. In both 2022 and -23, Ottawa was designated as a "Top 100 Rural & Community Hospital in the Country" by The Chartis Center for Rural Health, the industry's

most comprehensive and objective assessment of rural hospital performance. It was one of only 3 rural hospitals in Illinois to receive the distinction in 2023. SEMC-Ottawa's maternity unit is a Blue Cross Blue Shield Center of Distinction, proving it to be a high-quality department.

Since Ottawa was the first hospital OSF acquired in planning region C-02, there is no talk of the "I-80 corridor" in their agreement with our community. Rather, there is a lot of language around preserving Ottawa's history and creating a sustainable health care delivery system here in Ottawa. For example, OSF stated in that application that, ***"access for the Ottawa community will benefit by the OSF affiliation as there will be no decrease in service scope or levels of care currently provided. Rather, it's anticipated the affiliation will support an increased clinical program scope. OSF certifies that the affiliation will not result in restricting patient admissions and that Ottawa's admissions policies will not become more restrictive."***

An operational concern is the fact that OSF's plans will rely on regular transports and additional police presence – using tax payer funded resources that benefit a non-tax paying organization. 24 is the Average Daily Census at SEMC today in the med/surg unit (peak census is 36) and they have planned for only 12 med/surg beds in the new facility. The math speaks for itself in terms of transports and the additional burden that will be placed on Ottawa's ambulance services. And at any given time there are 4-6 police officers on patrol in Ottawa. Last year there were 67 calls to the hospital, which took 2-3 officers to respond to (1-3 hours per call). OSF plans to grow mental health services so those resources will be in even shorter supply.

Please vote against OSF's projects to demolish our hospital in Ottawa and replace it with a smaller facility that eliminates our ICU and OB units, and severely reduces our medical surgical unit to one of the smallest in the state. OSF's plans do not align with the growth in our area – both traditional residential and also through tourism as Heritage Harbor looks to build 300 vacation homes. OSF's plans also do not align with the promises they made to our community 12 short years ago – and the promises stated in their exemption application to the IHFSRB.

It is our hope that OSF takes the time to make a better plan for our hospital, one that is right-sized for our community's needs and honors the spirit of the partnership we entered into with their system and our local hospital.

Thank you,

Lori Perry
Citizens Advocate

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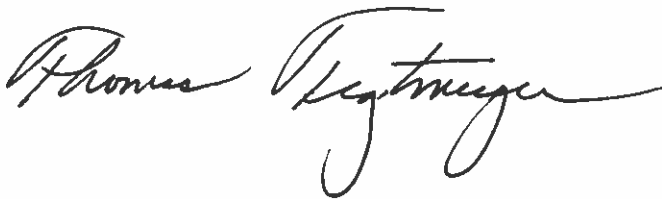
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Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas K. Kutzner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.