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Mayor of Ottawa, 1999-2019

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Ottawa Commissioner

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Former OSF VP Chief Medical
Officer at SEMC-Ottawa

Maeanne Stevens, RN, MSN
Former OSF VP Chief Nursing
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Nikki Thrush
Community Advocate

DATE: July 23, 2025

TO: Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board

RE: Opposition to Project #25013 OSF St. Elizabeth

Dear Members of the Board,

I am writing to formally oppose Project #25-013, OSF Saint Elizabeth Medical Center's proposal to discontinue its 5-bed Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and 14-bed Obstetrics (OB) services in Ottawa, Illinois.

Concerns and Reasons for Opposition

1. Loss of Core Medical Services

Discontinuing ICU and OB services at OSF Saint Elizabeth Medical Center will severely reduce critical healthcare access for Ottawa and surrounding communities. Many residents, especially the most vulnerable, rely on timely access to these essential services. The removal of these core departments endangers patient safety and forces individuals and families to travel farther for urgent medical needs.

2. Increased Travel Risks and Delays

If ICU and OB services are moved to Peru, patients experiencing emergencies will have to be transported to a different city, incurring dangerous delays. Real-world testimonials highlight situations where immediate care at OSF Saint Elizabeth made the difference between life and death.

3. Lack of Sufficient Community Engagement

Numerous community members, local leaders, and healthcare professionals have expressed concerns regarding the lack of transparency and limited community input during the planning process. Decisions affecting local health services should prioritize broad community needs, not corporate interests or remote administrative goals.

4. Potential Economic and Social Impact

Diminishing healthcare resources in Ottawa could discourage new businesses and families from settling in our area, negatively impacting the city's growth, local economy, and overall well-being.

5. The Proposal Does Not Reflect Local Demand

The proposed reduction in bed count for the new facility (from 54 to just 12) ignores actual occupancy trends and community demands. Even OSF's own projections acknowledge that the minimum number of occupied beds in Ottawa typically exceeds the planned capacity, indicating that the new facility will be inadequate from opening day.

6. No Clear Data Justifying Service Cuts

Despite repeated calls, OSF has failed to provide robust, data-driven justifications for downsizing services. The plan remains vague after months of review and has not demonstrated that it will adequately meet the healthcare needs of our population.

For the above reasons, I urge the Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board to deny OSF's application for Project #25-013. Please require OSF to revise its plans in close consultation with the Ottawa community to ensure that vital, local health services—including ICU and obstetric care—remain available and accessible.

Thank you for your consideration of our community's health and future.

Sincerely,
John M. Armstrong
Citizens for Healthcare in Ottawa
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