

October 29, 2025

Ms Debra Savage, Chairwoman  
Illinois Health Facilities & Services Review Board  
525 West Jefferson, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Springfield, IL. 62761

RE: Project #25-013 OSF St Elizabeth Medical Center-Ottawa, Discontinuation of ICU & OB

Dear Chairwoman Savage, Board Members & Board Staff:

I write this letter to provide insight into the discussions/negotiations between OSF & the City of Ottawa and representatives of the Citizens for Healthcare in Ottawa as well as the Ottawa Area Chamber of Commerce.

For the past 14 months we have been meeting with OSF executives as well as a couple of their Community Council Board Members in hopes of reaching a compromise to OSF's proposed plans for healthcare services in Ottawa which services Eastern Lasalle County. Our committee has consisted of State Representative Murri Briel, Mayor Robb Hasty, Commissioner's Wayne Eichelkraut & Tom Ganiere, Colleen Burns, retired Chief Medical Officer Dr. Brian Rosborough, Jay McCracken and myself.

On March 18, 2025 HFSRB granted an additional twelve month deferral for projects 24-011 & 24-013 which violated Board rules as stated in this meeting. The board implored OSF to work with the community and to send monthly updates to HFSRB. It was even requested to bring the Mayor back to a future board meeting to testify together(with OSF executives) in hopes of bringing the parties together. Our Mayor will be present at the next hearing on 11/18. Unfortunately, it won't be to testify together with OSF as the Board had ideally requested. Our Mayor will be present at the November 18<sup>th</sup> meeting to read his two minute statement in opposition to OSF's plans.

AJ Querciagrossa, Chief Executive Officer of the Western Region for OSF testified at the same meeting that "this wasn't negotiating we were attempting to get you on Board." I was surprised to hear this statement under oath as the City of Ottawa along with our Negotiating Committee had submitted a proposal in December that OSF outright rejected with no counter offer at all. My thoughts were if this CEO testified that we weren't negotiating what were we doing in all of those meetings prior to March 2025 when he made that statement to the HFSRB. I also was concerned of how upcoming meetings would be with our committee based upon that mindset and the Board requesting that we meet monthly with OSF.

Our committee resumed our meetings(after the 3/18/25 hearing) in May with OSF executives including OSF Chief Executive Officer Bob Sehring and a couple of OSF Community Council members from our community. We also met in June, July, August and September as well.

These meetings were good in the sense that we were attempting to exchange information from the stakeholders who ultimately make decisions. The challenge with these meetings is that you need to have participants that are willing to work together to agree to a compromise. Unfortunately, OSF CEO Bob Sehring made the statement multiple times in these meetings that we were just going to see how the hearing turns out in November. This meaning they had zero intent to engage in any potential compromise until the outcome is determined at the November HFSRB hearing.

This all changed when OSF reached out to all committee members to schedule an unplanned meeting for 10/1/25 under very short notification. We all hoped that this would be the olive branch that our committee(City of Ottawa & Citizens for Healthcare in Ottawa CHO) had been waiting for since last December when we made an offer that OSF flat out rejected but was unwilling to counter anything. OSF's offer was to permanently remove OB from Ottawa & Eastern Lasalle County in exchange for an ICU with very limited services for the "forseeable future." The other demand for this offer to be accepted was for the City of Ottawa & Citizens for Healthcare of Ottawa were to be required to send letters of support, testify at future public hearings in support of the plan and not show any statements of dissatisfaction. In other words, if you accept this offer we **silence** an entire City Government and an advocacy group comprised of elected & former elected officials, business leaders, retired public school administrators and community activists. This demand was and is truly incomprehensible and we sincerely hope the HFSRB doesn't condone this type of behavior of any hospital organization in the State of Illinois.

Since this offer was made so late by OSF as they acknowledged we had no time to allow us to attempt to counter. This offer was welcomed from our side except for the **silencing or muzzling** piece. They should have put this forward a month or two ago so the parties had ample time to comply with the deadlines from the HFSRB for the hearing on 11/18 and further negotiate. Based upon OSF's lack of interest in proposing a solution from December, 2024 up to October, 2025 even when the HFSRB Board strongly encouraged this at the **March** Board meeting one has to question whether this was a sincere offer to seek a solution at the last minute or possibly an attempt to show this Board before the November hearing that we tried to work with them, but they are not reasonable. Remember CEO Bob Sehring made perfectly clear in numerous meetings that they weren't interested in seeking a solution until after this hearing in November.

OSF's press release from October 17<sup>th</sup> did not help their standing in our community. Their intent in this press release was to announce that they made an offer, but the City of Ottawa and Citizens for Healthcare in Ottawa(CHO)rejected it. Their press release went on to say that "OSF Healthcare has always approached this work with compassion and transparency." Somehow OSF failed to share with the community, employees and provider groups that there were severe limitations of what would be offered in their ICU which was to last for the "forseeable future" and that the City of Ottawa and CHO would be required to be silenced in opposition and would be forced to support and testify in favor of their plans. OSF claimed they are transparent in this same release while omitting these extremely important pieces of information to their stakeholders. Mr. Sehring was even quoted in a local newspaper stating

that “We were not trying to muzzle the city or community in any way.” I believe this language speaks for itself in the September 22<sup>nd</sup> proposal that your board is in receipt of. No one could interpret that demand other than they were attempting to silence all of our voices—the opposition to their plans.

St Elizabeth Ottawa Campus has been a very profitable hospital for OSF. This is not a hospital that has been purchased out of bankruptcy like a few other hospital acquisitions that OSF has made. This has been and continues to be an award winning profitable hospital in rural America. These OB & ICU services are vital to Eastern Lasalle County. For the second June in a row a public hearing was held regarding OSF’s plans. The cafeatorium was again packed this past June as it was in June of 2024. It was truly heart wrenching to hear the emergency medical stories that were shared at this meeting and how those health outcomes would have been different if Ottawa didn’t have an ICU & OB. These decisions that are made from the HFSRB can truly make a difference between life & death. The Eastern Lasalle County region were and continue to be adamantly opposed to OSF’s plans. This has not changed. It was a very astute observation and statement at the hearing on March 18<sup>th</sup> when a Board Member said that there seems to be a disconnect with the Board Members on OSF’s Community Council and the members of the community that came to speak at that meeting. This truly is an understatement and it applies not only to those speakers but the majority of that of our region.

CON Project 25-013 for the Discontinuation of ICU & OB Services at OSF Saint Elizabeth Medical Center was never necessary. This is an artificial acceleration of services created by OSF. We ask you to be mindful in your deliberations and consider the severe & lasting impact this will have on this region—Eastern Lasalle County and the population of our area.

I hope this letter provides some insights into the discussions with OSF. Our side is very willing and open to continue dialogue. This dialogue needs to be open, honest, transparent-(truly transparent) and always, always have a willingness to compromise. Clearly, this has not been the goal of OSF regarding these projects. Please hold OSF accountable to their statements and willingness to work with the community. It has not happened so far. This region is standing up to OSF and we hope you hear these letters, speeches and social media posts echoed through your board room. We are standing up for our healthcare services. These services are essential to our vibrant, growing region of Eastern Lasalle County.

Please vote no to CON #25-013.

Sincerely,

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