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ILLINOIS STATE SENATE

JULIE A. MORRISON

STATE SENATOR • 29TH DISTRICT

MAJORITY CAUCUS WHIP

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APPROPRIATIONS - HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES
ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION
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November 18, 2025

Health Facilities and Services Review Board
Attention: John Kniery
525 W. Jefferson Street, Second Floor
Springfield, IL 62761

Dear Chairwoman Savage, Members of the Board and Administrator Kniery,

I am writing to express my strong support for **CON #25-033, Northwestern Medicine Catherine Gratz Griffin Lake Forest Hospital's application to establish an open-heart surgery program**. The establishment of a cardiac surgery program at the hospital will allow Lake County residents access to world-class, comprehensive cardiovascular care closer to home.

At present, a significant chasm exists preventing our residents from having convenient access to primary comprehensive cardiac care in Lake County. The situation has been exacerbated by the ongoing suspension of the open-heart surgery program at Vista Medical Center East. As a result, Lake County residents often must travel outside of their communities, and outside of the County, to access cardiovascular surgical care. This can lead to many challenges, which are often heightened by a lack of transportation, resulting in inconsistent follow-up care and worse patient outcomes.

Also, the situation can be a barrier to Lake County residents' ability to receive advanced minimally invasive cardiac procedures, such as Transcatheter Aortic Valve Replacement (TAVR), because these procedures are prohibited without full open heart surgical back-up. Improving access to open heart surgery is therefore important given that the demand for minimally invasive cardiac procedures like TAVR is expected to grow over 40% over the next 10 years in Lake County.

Gratz Griffin Lake Forest Hospital is a community hospital with over 90% of its patients admitted from within a 20-mile radius of the hospital, nearly one-third of whom reside in under-resourced zip codes. The hospital is a leading provider of care for Medicaid patients in Lake County and since 2015 has seen the largest percentage growth in Medicaid inpatient care of any Illinois hospital. Additionally, the hospital provides more charity care than any other hospital in Lake County.

Lake County residents need and deserve high-quality, comprehensive cardiovascular health care that is accessible to them. Establishing an open-heart surgery program at Gratz Griffin Lake Forest Hospital will reduce transportation costs and logistical challenges for hundreds of Lake County residents and ultimately lead to better follow-up care and better patient outcomes.

Thank you for your consideration. If approved, Gratz Griffin Lake Forest Hospital's open-heart surgery program will improve and transform the lives of residents in all of Lake County.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Julie Morrison in cursive script.
Julie Morrison
State Senator, 29th District