



December 15, 2025

CON #25-033 Lake Forest Hospital Open Heart Surgery

Dear Members of the Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board,

As the Fire Chief of the Lake Forest Fire Department, I am writing in strong support of Northwestern Medicine Lake Forest Hospital's (LFH) Certificate of Need application, #25-033, to establish an open heart surgery program at its facility in Lake Forest, Illinois.

From the perspective of pre-hospital emergency services, the addition of this program is necessary and beneficial not only to our patients, but to those of the broader Lake County region. Our crews frequently respond to cardiac emergencies in Lake Forest, Lake Bluff, and neighboring communities. In many cases, critically ill cardiac patients must be transferred from Lake Forest Hospital to another Northwestern Medicine facility farther away — often to downtown Chicago — to access the specialized cardiovascular surgical services they require. These extended transport times can add 30 to 60 minutes or more to the time before definitive treatment begins, which can make a significant difference in survival and recovery outcomes.

Establishing open heart surgery capabilities at LFH will:

- **Reduce transport times** for cardiac emergencies, ensuring that patients receive life-saving care faster and closer to home.
- **Improve continuity of care**, as patients will be able to receive the full spectrum of cardiovascular treatment—from diagnosis through rehabilitation—within their own community.
- **Enhance access to advanced procedures** such as Transcatheter Aortic Valve Replacement (TAVR), which currently cannot be performed at LFH without full surgical backup.
- **Strengthen collaboration** between hospital and EMS providers, improving regional preparedness for complex cardiac events.





Having an open heart surgery program at LFH would directly support better patient outcomes, improve system efficiency, and reduce strain on emergency transport resources. It will also provide peace of mind for families knowing that world-class cardiac care is available right here in Lake County.

On behalf of Lake Forest Fire Department, I strongly urge the Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board to approve Northwestern Medicine Lake Forest Hospital's application to establish an open heart surgery program.

Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to improving access to life-saving cardiac care across Illinois.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andy Rick', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Andy Rick | Fire Chief

