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Entity Represented: re Alexian Brothers Obstetrics

Category: Other

LETTER OF OPPOSITION TO ALEXIAN BROTHERS OBSTETRICS CLOSURE PROPOSAL

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Janet Ford, APRN, CNM, IBCLC. I am currently on the medical staff as an advanced practice nurse/certified nurse midwife at ABMC for 19 years; I was a labor and delivery RN at ABMC prior to that for 6 additional years. I have lived in Elk Grove Village since 1972, this is my community.

The proposal to close the Obstetrics Unit at ABMC is absurd. The unit has been providing service to the entire Northern Illinois region since 1966, especially to the NW and W suburban areas. Elk Grove Village is a town of 33,000 residents. Elk Grove Village has the largest industrial park in the world, the Busse Woods recreation center, fine schools, churches, award-winning police and fire departments, is adjacent to O'Hare International Airport, and has immediate expressway access to 290, 90, 53, 294 expressways. Elk Grove Village is starting to recover from COVID disaster and young families plan to bear children and need maternity services such as those provided at ABMC. ABMC Obstetrics unit serves people from all over the world, a multitude of cultures, languages, socioeconomic backgrounds. ABMC has been under the Ascension management for a few years; Ascension is the largest Catholic NON-PROFIT healthcare system in the country. To close this unit would create an enormous gap in vital care to the women, babies and families that live, work, and visit here. ABMC is a COMMUNITY hospital... community hospitals have OB units. Elk Grove Village has funded many millions of dollars of projects to help ABMC remain viable in our community.

Thus, it was a shock and a surprise when Ascension announced on July 1, 2025, that it planned to close the Obstetrics unit. This is a busy unit, with assumptions of increased business in near future with a baby boom underway. 120-150 deliveries on average is no small measure. I have personally helped more than 2500 women deliver their babies safely at ABMC since 2006. I work for a private OB/GYN practice.

Please be aware that Ascension's 39-page application contains important misinformation:

1) on p. 22, first paragraph states that obstetricians on staff made decision to close--THEY MOST CERTAINLY DID NOT. This decision to close was NOT made by the OBs on staff and most OBs on staff were completely blindsided by this proposal. Some OBs even recently leased office space for their OB/GYN patients with promises from ABMC administration that there was no intention to uproot the OB Dept. Lies.

2) ABMC does NOT HAVE A LEVEL 1 NICU! Outrageous. ABMC has a thriving Level 2 NICU which is a fabulous resource to the community for very sick babies that allows them to stay close to home and not have to go to Chicago for care. Another lie.

Ascension has been closing their OB units at an outrageous rate of approximately 25% nationwide, whereas the expected closings nationwide would normally expect to be about 6% (National Nurses United). In 2022-2023, Ascension Wisconsin created a "birth desert" in southern Milwaukee and US Senator Tammy Baldwin and other federal representatives demanded an investigation into the motives of Ascension closing down OB units all over the state (and country). Ascension is a not for profit; therefore, they cannot just close units that they deem unprofitable at will; we all know ortho, neuro, cardiology, oncology units make more money for hospital systems. However, OB units are the heart of the hospital! Every family has used an OB unit at some point! Babies and mothers have softer voices so corporate healthcare executives believe they can just roll over this vulnerable population without

resistance! Smart CEOs would understand that loyalty to a hospital system begins at birth, and that loyalty will carry over to later life issues and health concerns. But, no, apparently, healthcare executives are more concerned with a quick profit than thinking about longterm loyalty and as Ascension Alexian Brothers has had 3 different CEOs in 5 years, we know that these people have no loyalty or concern whatsoever for the patients, the community or the longterm status of healthcare quality in our country. They won't be around to witness the devastating aftermath of closing vital healthcare services.

The ruse of this closure is that St Alexius Medical Center in Hoffman Estates will be the new OB Center of Excellence after ABMC closes. Another falsehood . . . SAMC cannot even manage its current OB and NICU patients and is often on bypass, deferring clients to other hospitals. The current private OB practitioners on staff have not been invited to practice at SAMC--in fact, the independent OB groups have been cautioned NOT to bring their patients there since SAMC cannot handle any more volume. So, the whole concept of SAMC taking over ABMC patients is a joke--a well known impossibility.

Apparently, Ascension made some bad financial decisions with their mergers, acquisitions and spinoffs in recent years and they are hurting financially. . . none of this proposal has anything to do with OB excellence . . . it is about financial ineptitude, poor decision making by management, schemes on ways to cut units that don't make a lot of money and other scandalous motives. Meanwhile, they build empty ghosttown care units and have cranes and contractors ripping up parking lots and infrastructure. No money spent on OB, that's for sure. In fact, ABMC has illegally intimidated employees, staff and medical providers regarding this closure, planting the seed of inevitability that ABMC will close the OB unit regardless of the State of Illinois findings or decision. The staff nurses and techs have been threatened into joining the SAMC staff to support that hospital's shortages. The ABMC staff nurses have been scrambling for proper staffing for months, given little to no resources by management, and working overtime to cover gaps. ABMC wants to make the unit so staff-poor that they can claim to close the unit due to safety issues, another immoral action. The CEO even said that they will just pay a fine and proceed to close OB even if the State of Illinois declines the application to close! Really? Money talks apparently if an entity that gets taxpayer dollars can just buck the community and state decision and close anyway. Shameful thinking--those with the money to pay can get their own way? Those of us who are dedicated to our patients and our communities are sickened by the underhanded lying, greed, and misrepresentation of purpose to the staff, community, and state governments. Ascension receives tax breaks, other government incentives to serve the poor and the community at large and they owe this community the decency to continue the vital services of an OB unit. Without an OB service, mothers and babies will die, the community reputation will suffer, people will not want to move here, and the start of an OB desert will begin here. GlenOaks closed only a few years ago as well as Holy Family . . . The State of Illinois cannot allow this to continue. It is immoral. Ascension is certainly not living by its mission statement: "Rooted in the loving ministry of Jesus as healer, we commit ourselves to serving all persons with special attention to those who are poor and vulnerable. . . ." Ascension does not care about the poor. Our CEO team is not even Catholic or Christian--this may be the root of their moral and ethical problem as they don't understand what it is to actually serve others and follow God's calling.

Emergency Room cannot handle OB patients--period. Nor do they want to nor should they want to. If OB closes, patients will continue to present to ABMC ER as rational thinking people would never imagine such a huge hospital campus would NOT have an OB unit . . . it is absolutely ridiculous. A pregnant woman with a lifethreatening ectopic pregnancy, or a woman with a prolapsed umbilical cord cannot wait 30 mins to get to SAMC if they arrive initially to ABMC for immediate treatment. Those who know obstetrics understand this.

State of IL--do the RIGHT thing! Deny Ascension the ability to close the OB services department and block their ability to pay a fine to override such a decision. Protect the families of Illinois and stop greedy healthcare entities from playing games with our lives.

Sincerely,
Janet Ford, APRN, CNM, IBCLC
Elk Grove Village, IL

