

12-060

To the Health Facilities and Services Review Board:

We oppose the closing of Singer Mental Health Center. Singer should remain open due to all the reasons previously stated during the forum. These reasons include: the number of annual admissions, the type of clients Singer provides services for, the twenty one county region it serves ( not just nine), the quality of care from tenured staff, the many professional surveys passed with high marks, the teaching that staff provides for students in various health care professions, and finally the economics. The impact of the closing on this community would be immense. The indirect costs of transporting patients to areas in Chicago or Springfield, the emergency room visits, and the costs of unemployment disbursements to former employees should be explored. The funding has been approved through the legislature to fully operate Singer for the upcoming fiscal year; therefore, this is not a budgetary issue.

If it is the plan to move patients out of an inpatient setting, then I feel the plan should be implemented in a series of steps. First, look at a county close to Singer and truly track all the data of those individuals to see what the impact will bring. If favorable results, then add another county further away to see if the same results occur. If the intended plan by the community health centers fails, what will happen? Other state facilities are full. The individuals in this region will have no options. We feel it is the state's responsibility to take care of this population, not to abandon them.

We, as pharmacy students, have benefited greatly by our time here at Singer. It has broadened our knowledge of psychiatric medicine and allowed us to learn from specially trained pharmacists that are not widely available. The closing of Singer will deny pharmacy students from across the Midwest the opportunity to learn in this valuable setting. This experience has shown us how little representation the mental health community has. It has been an eye-opening experience and shown us how valuable inpatient psychiatric care is to those who suffer from illness too severe to be safely and adequately managed in the community.

We hope you will truly consider the facts brought up by many to make a sound decision. People's lives are at stake.

Sincerely,

Pharmacy Students: Drake University College of Pharmacy, St. Louis College of Pharmacy, and University of Illinois Chicago College of Pharmacy