

Lithuanian Roman Catholic Charities, Inc.

Founded 1914
5850 W. 111th Street, Chicago Ridge, IL 60415

November 16, 2012

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HEALTH FACILITIES &
SERVICES REVIEW BOARD

12-079

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To: Ms. Courtney Avery, Administrator,
Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board
525 West Jefferson
Springfield, Ill. 62761

RE: Applicant 12-079 HCH/Chicago

Dear Members of the Ill. Health Facilities and Services Review Board:

I am writing to you as the duly-elected President of the Lithuanian Roman Catholic Charities, the organization which founded Holy Cross Hospital, (documented on the HCH cornerstone), and as a practicing physician at HCH for 31 years. I strongly urge you to vote against the proposed merger of HCH with Mt. Sinai hospital.

This merger is being organized by Sister Immacula Wendt, General Superior of the Sisters of St. Casimir, and is being implemented by Mr. Wayne Lerner, a Sister Wendt appointee to the post of HCH president. A recent public letter by Sister Wendt discloses her total ignorance of the history of HCH. In this letter she publicly denies that the Lithuanian Roman Catholic Charities (LRCC) had any role in the financing or governance of HCH. This is totally incorrect!

The very land on which HCH stands was purchased in 1914 by Rev. A. Stanukynas, the co-founder of LRCC, Board member and first treasurer. His full-length stone statue stands in front of the Sisters' Motherhouse. On Dec. 10, 1918, he gave the deed for the 10 acres of land to the Archdiocese of Chicago with the stipulation: "that lands described within this document must be used for the sole purpose and benefit of the Lithuanian Roman Catholic Charities of America." In 1928, when the Hospital opened, Cardinal Mundelein himself set up the Board of Directors: 2 members from LRCC, 2 Sisters of St. Casimir, 2 physicians from HCH and 2 from Loyola University.

The LRCC funded the entire construction of the HCH first building at a cost of \$165,225.75 and a loan for the remaining \$250,000. The Order of St. Casimir contributed very little money, as they were a teaching Order and had no money. Over the ensuing years, as the Sisters administered the Hospital, the LRCC and Loyola Board members were pushed out. The Sisters started to publicly state that they founded HCH! There was no Lithuanian lay representation on the HCH Board of Directors for 40 years, even as the surrounding community was heavily Lithuanian-American and a large percentage of patients, physicians and staff were of Lithuanian heritage. There was definitely ethnic discrimination by the Sisters, ironically enough, against the very group that built the hospital and invited them in to staff it.

This raises important moral and ethical questions: Does this Order of Nuns have the right to, in the words of Mr. Lerner "give themselves away to Mt. Sinai"? (Crain's Chicago Business). Not according to Thomas Kennedy, the Director of Real Estate Management for the

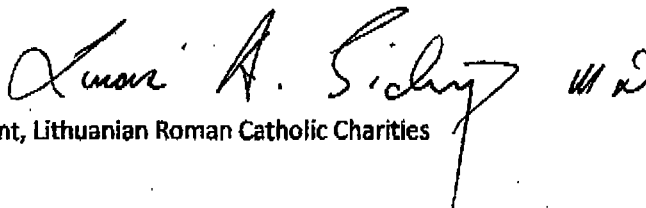
Archdiocese of Chicago. He states that the deed is owned by Holy Cross Hospital, not by the Sisters. (On the merger petition, the Sisters of St. Casimir are listed as Owners and Operators.) In today's Southwest News-Herald, 11-16-12, hospital spokesman Dennis Ryan does not claim that the Sisters own the hospital, he only states that the Sisters "have sponsored Holy Cross for decades..." So, does a "sponsor" have the right to implement a "Merger" which would entirely eliminate the HCH Board of Directors and end its existence as an independent identity? Do they have a right to "confiscate" the donations given by poor, working Catholic faithful to a Catholic institution and give it all away to a non-Catholic, non-local business enterprise?

The Cardinal-Archbishop of the Chicago Archdiocese was publicly entrusted by Rev. Stanukynas, the LRCC and the Lithuanian-American community of the Southwest side to safeguard this non-profit institution on behalf of this group who willingly sacrificed their own time and money for the community. Francis Cardinal George has already indicated to the Sisters that, if they must partner, they should partner with St. Anthony. The non-Catholic president of HCH, Mr. Lerner, has disregarded this fact. Mr. Lerner came in as president with the promise that he would "save" HCH, and instead, is organizing its self-destruction. The merger would be seen by the Lithuanian Catholic community world-wide as a tragic loss of the one and only hospital built by the Lithuanian community in the USA. This would embarrass the Archdiocese of Chicago and insult our beloved Francis Cardinal George, gravely ill with cancer.

There are other public perception issues to consider: At this time, the mayor of Chicago is Jewish. Also, we have a Jewish president of HCH "giving away" to the Jewish Federation of Chicago an 82 million dollar South Side Catholic institution - for ZERO dollars! This sounds incredibly suspicious. Are there under-the-table private agreements and personal kick-backs? Also very important to consider: When Mt. Sinai takes control of HCH, there likely will be layoffs of existing personnel and replacement with Mt. Sinai employees. This wave of lay-offs could be interpreted by the public as racially motivated and could inflame community tensions.

The early letters being received in favor of the Merger are deceiving: many of them are written by people on the payroll of HCH or have received money or favors from HCH. Astonishingly, these important facts are not disclosed in the letters! One example is the letter written by a physician at HCH who omits to mention that she is a nun of St. Casimir, has taken a vow of obedience, and must follow the directives of her Superior, Sr. Immacula Wendt. Physicians and staff at HCH who are against the merger, regrettably, are afraid to speak out because of fear of reprisals.

We ask the Illinois HFSR Board to resist this merger campaign of secret politics, discrimination and lies. If Sister Wendt wants to give HCH away, she should give it back to LRCC. Moreover, any status change of HCH should have the blessing of the Cardinal, which he has not given.



Linus A. Sidrys, M.D., President, Lithuanian Roman Catholic Charities