



CHICAGO FIRE DEPARTMENT
CITY OF CHICAGO
OFFICE OF THE FIRE COMMISSIONER

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AUG 07 2014

HEALTH FACILITIES &
SERVICES REVIEW BOARD

14-013

August 5, 2014

Ms. Courtney R. Avery, Administrator
Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board
525 West Jefferson Street, 2nd Floor
Springfield, Illinois 62761

Dear Ms. Avery:

As Fire Commissioner for the Chicago Fire Department (CFD), I am writing this letter in support of the University of Chicago Medical Center's (UCMC) Certificate of Need Application for the addition of 38 medical-surgical beds and how important this has been to our EMS Region 11 system and the patients we serve. The CFD participates in the Chicago's Emergency Medical Services System (EMS System) and our goal is to be able to provide the best pre-hospital care to the residents and visitors throughout Chicago.

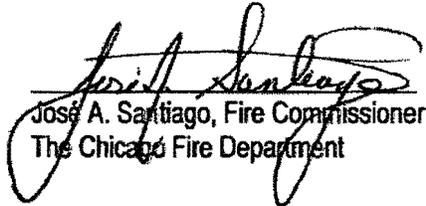
Prior to the addition of these additional medical-surgical beds, overcrowding, both in UCMC's Emergency Department (ED) and its inpatient beds, forced UCMC's ED to go on frequent bypass (diversion), and UCMC's rates of diversion were among the highest in the State of Illinois. For the CFD, this translates to transporting our patients to further hospitals other than the closest, which in turn effects both our response and transport times.

The addition of 38 medical-surgical beds has alleviated this problem with UCMC. During a recent three-month period, after the beds opened, UCMC's ED was on diversion for only 13 hours, a substantial decrease from last year when UCMC averaged 75 hours on diversion per month. UCMC also went 84 consecutive days without going on diversion this past spring. Overall, UCMC's rate of diversion represents an 80% improvement since 2011. At the same time, the volume of patients seen in UCMC's ED and admitted to the hospital continues to grow.

The EMS System is a key part of our health care safety net, and our patients are significantly impacted by ED overcrowding. We know that one of the leading causes of ED overcrowding is a lack of inpatient hospital beds. With the additional beds, UCMC has demonstrated it can see more patients and avoid the kind of overcrowding that leads to diverting ambulances to other hospitals. Further, because the pre-hospital and hospital components of the EMS System are integrated, when diversion at UCMC is lower, the rest of the EMS System, including our patients, benefit.

UCMC's lower rate of diversion means that more people can get emergency health care close to home. In fact, the additional medical-surgical beds at UCMC improve access to emergency medical care throughout our City, and we support the maintenance of this important resource for our EMS Region. Please feel free to contact my office or my Leslee Stein-Spencer, from my staff directly if you need additional information. Ms. Stein-Spencer can be contacted at leslie.stein-spencer@cityofchicago.org or by phone, at 312 746-4634. Thank you very much for your attention to this issue.

Sincerely,



José A. Santiago, Fire Commissioner
The Chicago Fire Department