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November 14, 2018

**Via Hand Delivery**

Courtney Avery  
Board Administrator  
Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board  
525 West Jefferson Street, 2<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Springfield, IL 62761

**Re: Letter of Support for North Suburban Pain and Spine Center, LLC (“NSPS”),  
Project #18-018**

Dear Board Administrator Avery:

I am writing this letter **in support of** the application for a Certificate of Need submitted by North Suburban Pain and Spine Center, LLC (“NSPS”) for a proposed Ambulatory Surgery Center to be located at 9680 Golf Road, Des Plaines, Illinois.

I am a health care attorney and an owner of an Illinois medical cannabis dispensary. As such, I am knowledgeable about the need for alternatives to pharmaceutical-reliant pain management. In addition, I believe I am uniquely well-suited to speak to the merits of NSPS’ application and Dr. Saldanha’s character as I have worked with him over the past three years.

I have had the great pleasure of seeing Dr. Saldanha grow as a physician from the time of his completing his fellowship to watching him build a pain management practice with focus and determination. Despite the lure of shortcuts, Dr. Saldanha has always focused on doing things the right way. He became a founding member of Midwest Anesthesia and Pain Specialists, S.C. (MAPS), and worked with his colleagues to build a practice based upon a commitment to providing excellent service to patients and working hand in glove with referring physicians. Recruiting other members of his residency class, as well as his attending physician, MAPS has put together a team of intelligent, highly dedicated physicians whom I firmly believe provide the best pain management care in the State.

In addition to being an excellent doctor, Dr. Saldanha also has a background in healthcare management and administration, with a proven record of success at his multi-specialty outpatient surgery center located in the south side of Chicago. He is double-board certified in anesthesiology and pain medicine, and is also sought after in his industry as a presenter at national conferences in the fields of neurobiology, chemistry, anesthesiology, and pain medicine.

What sets Dr. Saldanha and MAPS' apart from other physicians in the field is their commitment to excellence and their holistic approach to pain treatment. Dr. Saldanha and the physicians at MAPS use state of the art procedures to manage and treat a patient's pain without overreliance on pharmaceutical options which only offer temporary relief of pain symptoms. Unfortunately, as we have seen recently, this can often lead to patients becoming addicted and caught in a never-ending cycle of pain and pain medications. With a patient-centered care model, Dr. Saldanha works with patients to identify treatments that will allow them to return to daily life without chronic pain and without resorting to regular use of opioid based pain medications. He is open to all available alternatives and, despite appreciating the overwhelming need for increased access to surgical interventional pain management options, he is open to exploring any and all proper methods that will meet the needs of the patients under his care.

MAPS' commitment to excellence and their dedication to exploring creative alternatives to the treatment and management of patients with chronic and/or acute pain is obviously resonating with patients, as the practice has seen significant growth at its Des Plaines and Northwest Chicago office-based practice. MAPS is collaborating with other pain management and specialist physicians (including neurosurgeons and orthopedic surgeons) to promote a multi-disciplinary approach to the treatment of chronic pain and offer relief from over reliance upon opioid medications. I am also proud to say that they have worked with patients who use medicinal cannabis as a method to treat the chronic pain from which they suffer.

MAPS' willingness to work with patients and not pass judgement on their choice of options, including the utilization of properly prescribed medical cannabis as an alternative to opioid based medications for the treatment of pain, is truly progressive. Medical cannabis cannot provide the sole answer to the opioid epidemic, but it can be a useful tool for patients who are looking for an alternative.

Interventional pain management is another key tool in this arena, and there is insufficient access to capable and open-minded physicians and facilities dedicated to this area. The scope and severity of the opioid epidemic are so well documented that the State of Illinois issued an Opioid Action Plan (the "OAP") in September 2017. The report makes clear that the "opioid epidemic is the most significant public health and public safety crisis facing Illinois." Even more disheartening, the OAP recognized that the "crisis will get worse before it gets better." Significantly, the OAP recognized that "[a]lthough it would seem that an easy solution to the epidemic would be to reduce the availability of prescription opioids, these medications are often necessary for patients who suffer from acute and chronic pain." As a result, the OAP found that, "[i]n the absence of alternative treatments, reducing the supply of prescription opioids too abruptly may drive more people to switch to using illicit drugs (including heroin), thus increasing the risk of overdose."

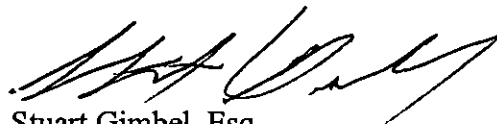
There is a direct correlation between the opioid crisis in our country and physicians who are unable to properly assess and treat patients with chronic pain. Physicians like Dr. Saldanha are on the front lines of this war and his work identifying the source of his patients' pain and providing a full array of treatment options will undoubtedly reduce the number of individuals susceptible to becoming addicted to pain medication. The proposed project is a vital component for MAPS' ability to provide their patients with a full complement of procedure options that can only be performed in either an ASTC or a hospital surgical suite.

MAPS and the other physicians who have committed to referring patients to this ASTC, if approved, are committed to utilizing the latest options in pain management, orthopedic and neurosurgical interventions (including new and developing technologies such as spinal cord stimulators and regenerative medicine procedures), which have been shown to decrease pain-related disability and reduce opioid use. These specialists perform procedures that not only help patients manage their existing pain (pain management physicians such as Michael Rock, M.D.), but also help to cure the underlying causes of their pain (such as neurosurgeon Sean Salehi, M.D. and orthopedic surgeon Steven Scramberg, M.D.).

As an advocate for the proper utilization of medicinal cannabis and the role it can play in helping address chronic pain, I am aware of the need for further advancement of surgical options for the treatment of chronic pain. I am proud to be associated with such a forward-thinking group of physicians whose number one focus is the patient. I believe this project will allow the doctors from MAPS to increase access to these life-altering procedures in the surrounding community while reducing the costs of performing these procedures in costly hospital surgical suites.

Thank you for your consideration of my letter of support for this application. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about my support, or wish to learn more about my involvement with MAPS or the medical cannabis industry.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stuart Gimbel", written in a cursive style.

Stuart Gimbel, Esq.