

January 25, 2022

Dear Chairwoman Savage and Members of the Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board:

I, Dr. Airica Steed, System Chief Operating Officer, Executive Vice President – Sinai Chicago and Interim President of Mount Sinai Hospital am writing in support of the University of Chicago Medicine’s proposed new cancer center, which will be the first freestanding facility dedicated to cancer care and research in Chicago and will greatly benefit the city’s South Side.

As a partner in the 13-member South Side Healthy Community Organization (SSHCO), we are committed to improving the health of South Side residents and believe this proposed cancer center will help strengthen the entire healthcare ecosystem within this community. Our SSHCO model is focused on strengthening primary and specialty care access, preventive and chronic care management, care coordination and management, provider collaboration, and community engagement — all of which will be enhanced by the proposed cancer center. We understand that UChicago Medicine’s facility will deliver multidisciplinary, technologically advanced care with access to the latest therapies and treatment innovations, anchored by basic and translational research that the institution is known for.

We are keenly aware that UChicago Medicine operates at capacity almost every day and is frequently forced to call surge conditions. Capacity constraints and surge conditions limit our ability to transfer patients whose care needs can be met only at an academic health system like UChicago Medicine. A new cancer hospital will help to ensure all South Side patients have convenient access to high-quality specialized care when they need it.

There is no denying that patients on the South Side do not have the same access to quality healthcare that residents in other parts of the city enjoy. Indeed, statistics show that over half of South Side patients elect to leave the area for the care they need. Cancer is also the second leading cause of death in our communities, and residents on the South Side of Chicago are twice as likely to die from cancer compared to almost anywhere else in the United States.

These types of inequities in health outcomes are largely a product of social determinants of health, including access to cancer prevention and care. A new cancer facility will finally provide South Side residents with the resources that other neighborhoods in the city often take for granted. South Side patients deserve both a system of community hospitals and academic medicine-level complex care, just as patients in other parts of the city receive.

If approved, this expansion will go a long way toward supporting the goals of the SSHCO and establishing a stronger healthcare system on the South Side. We hope you help the city take this important step toward health equity by supporting this proposed cancer center.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Airica Steed".

Airica Steed, Ed.D, MBA, RN, CSSMBB, FACHE, IASSC  
System Chief Operating Officer, Executive Vice President – Sinai Chicago  
Interim President, Mount Sinai Hospital