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HEALTH FACILITIES &
SERVICES REVIEW BOARD

Ms. Kathryn J. Olson, Chair
Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board
525 West Jefferson, Second Floor
Springfield, Illinois 62761

Re: Requested approval for SwedishAmerican Hospital's CON application to modernize its existing facility and construct a new Women's and Children's Tower, and its exemption application to add a neonatal intensive care unit.

Dear Chairwoman Olson,

I am writing to express my support for the CON and COE applications referred to above.

According to the Inventory of Need Determinations (p. F-2) from the IHFSARB for the NICU service 2013, Health Service Area 1 (HSA) includes 9 counties with a population of over 700,000. This area stretches from Boone and Dekalb on the east side to Jo Davies, Carroll, and Whiteside to the west, extending all the way to the Iowa border. The southern area of HSA 1 includes Lee and Ogle counties.

MercyHealth runs the only level III NICU in the HSA 1 area. This NICU will soon be located in the new building on the far east side of Winnebago County, a few miles from Boone County. With its 46 existing beds, this NICU has had 350 admissions and 11,545 patient days in the year 2013.

The HSA region 2 & 10, just southwest of HSA 1, encompasses 15 counties with a population of over 850,000. This area has one existing level III NICU located in St. Francis Medical Center in Peoria.

Therefore, there are only 2 level III NICUs to serve the three HSA regions – 1, 2, & 10 encompassing 24 counties (including LaSalle, the second largest county in Illinois), a population of 1,500,000, and an area of over 14,000 square miles.

With those facts offered and recognized, I would like to address three points:

Access, availability, and convenience

With MercyHealth's level III NICU being located in the most northeastern section of the HSA 1 area and St. Francis' NICU in the southeastern area of HSA 2 & 10, there is limited, difficult and timely access for a large number of families with the most vulnerable infants.
SwedishAmerican's proposed level III NICU would be located approximately 10 miles west of the MercyHealth facility. This would provide easier access to the far west counties. Additionally, the far north and west counties of HSA 2, 10 – Bureau, La Salle, Henry and Rock Island would have access to a level III NICU closer to home than Peoria.

Choice and competition

Choices are good for the market. They provide competition and economic options for the consumer and in this case, insurance companies. The health care market benefits from services provided by different health care facilities. In this case I feel that SwedishAmerican's proposed 10 bed level III NICU is not a duplication of services, but rather an extension and enhancement of services needed in Health Service Area 1. There was almost one admission per day to the MercyHealth NICU in 2013. Therefore, it would seem reasonable that another reliable health care facility should share the load of care.

Job Market

The 10 bed level III NICU at SwedishAmerican would also open up the job market for the highly skilled medical personnel needed for a level III NICU. The availability of different opportunities for employment is a needed entity for persons who work in this highly focused area of health care.

A final thought. The CEO of SwedishAmerican is a physician. The CEO of MercyHealth is a businessman. SwedishAmerican's Mission Statement is: "Through excellence in healthcare and compassionate service, we care for our community." MercyHealth's Mission Statement: "Provide exceptional health care services, resulting in healing in the broadest sense." A physician tends to care more about the health of the community than a businessman would. A businessman tends to be more concerned with the bottom line, effect, and yield.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
Sincerely,

Deborah Gortowski

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