

**Section II: Testimony/ Written Comment**

**RECEIVED**

AUG 28 2019

**HEALTH FACILITIES &  
SERVICES REVIEW BOARD**

To Whom It May Concern:

My Name is Patricia Morrone and I am a lifelong resident of Blue Island and an Employee of Metro South Medical Center for the past 48 years.

As I write you today.....I am overcome by the emotion of the closing of Metro South Medical Center, once known as St. Francis Hospital. I am amazed by all of the changes that took place in my lifetime. In fact I can remember when the land the hospital is built on was once a park in which I played at with my family and friends. Before the hospital was built this land was blessed which in my eyes and many others – is HOLY ground. I now want to share with you... the rest of my journey, *here...*

St. Francis has been at the root of my family's life since forever. It seemed as though SF/(MSMC) was calling me before my birth. I was born at this hospital, along with my siblings and most of the residents in Blue Island. My mother and aunt worked here back in the early days. At that time they were making a dollar a day. At the age of 14 I started volunteering as a polka dotter, graduating to a candy striper, and then at the age of 16 I was hired on as a staff member. I not only worked, but continued to volunteer as well, so I could be a debutant in the SF cotillion. My sisters, along with cousins, uncles and aunts, and extended family members were at one time a part of the hospital staff. Like I said the hospital has been a big part of my family's life, along with many Blue Islanders.

Throughout my 48 years here, I have been employed in various departments, including the Mail Room, Business Office, I.T. and the Finance Dept. I have also been known as friend, event planner, and spiritual counselor to many. I was nominated and chosen as years the last St. Francis' Employee Basket Pin Award person, (before the 1<sup>st</sup> closure then sale of the hospital back in 2008) which was such a **BIG HONOR** and I accepted this award with **Great Joy**. For those of you who are not familiar with the award and its meaning..... the **B.A.S.K.E.T.** philosophy (**Because All Serve with Kindness, Enthusiasm and Tenderness**), is something in which Mother Odilia (founder of SF) advocated as she took care of the **poor** and **underserved**, the mission called for **us to live out the values which Jesus Christ Himself demonstrated.**

I have walked many miles through the halls of the hospital and because of that... have worked with and met so many wonderful people, from employees to visitors. The feeling that has really struck me through-out the years is... this place *is* a place of **ONENESS**. We worked together, through problems, projects....whatever the situation. In the weeks....I have **again** witnessed for myself the sense of oneness within our community. People have been united and reunited for one cause and that is to **SAVE** the hospital in which we all have come to depend on and love. From political figures to the person next door....there was no stone un-turn.....for the fight to **SAVE** Metro South has been a true test of **FAITH**.

As employees gathered to pray and rally...we couldn't help but reminisce about the good times we have had at throughout the years. As we console each other through this time, I tell them to continue to be positive, have FAITH, HOPE and TRUST, believe that God and the sisters who founded this hospital are walking and praying with us and for us, they are handling the situation. It's in **God's** hands and his will – will be done and that he will not let us down, whatever the outcome is.

This hospital cares for a large population of people from several surrounding communities, especially those who are underserved. Also, this hospital is easily accessible to public transportation and walk able for those who live in the community. It has been a pillar in our community for about 115 years. MSMC employs a large number of community residents – some who have worked there for well over 30 years. The closing will also have a **HUGH** impact on the community businesses.

Further, the closing will have a **Hugh** impact on our resident's access to care. They will have to travel further to receive emergency care or admission to hospital. I pray that the City of Blue Island, County of Cook and the State of Illinois take action to keep Metro South Medical Center open to continue and to serve our residents.

In conclusion, I would like to leave you with this.

“A famous author G.K Chesterton described St. Francis of Assisi as a “SPECULUM Christ.” If we translate that from Latin it means a mirror of Christ. That is exactly what Francis Bernadone; popularly known as St. Francis of Assisi is to all of us.

Regardless of the century, the country, and even the religion, and name of the hospital; St. Francis reveals how our human potential can extend for an individual to look like, act like, think like, and actually become like God.

As the original origin of the hospital (Metro South Medical Center) bares honor to him, let each life be resolved to strive every day, with every patient and every opportunity here to walk in his footsteps. Then we will be on a journey to forever become God like.”

As to not take up too much more time.....I just want to finish by saying.....I am so very proud to have worked here for the past 48 years. I was hoping to retire from here and call it my forever home. This has been an incredible journey for me so far.....I look forward to wherever the path may lead me next. May the light of God touch each and every one of you and that you are guided to make the right decisions concerning MSMC and the Blue Island community.

Thank You!  
Patricia A Morrone

SUBJECT: Maintaining MetroSouth as a vital part of our community.

MetroSouth has an obligation to the public derived from the Commission's authority and many funds received from donors and the government over time.

MetroSouth has not informed the public early on ("over 40 institutions contacted" according to a very recent statement) over some period of time. This has left the public and staff with little or no time to participate in the process. As an example, Cook County has found significant need so that it is rehabbing a facility only blocks away from MetroSouth!

MetroSouth has, since and before affiliation with CHS, done little to maintain or upgrade facilities, has seemingly made few attempts at expanding customer base (increasingly outsourced testing and services leading to reduced quality of service, e.g. many lab tests are sent out to labs as far as the East Coast resulting in long delays in receipt of results).

MetroSouth has seemingly had an extraordinary top heavy management staff that, in addition to being a significant financial drain on the institution, showed little evidence of applying the technical expertise needed to expand customer base and operate efficiently. For example, the software systems used were woefully out of date requiring many extra steps to report patient data and deterring employees reporting potentially dangerous situation (reports of 45 minutes to report a problem on a lengthy questionnaire with inputs not available because the employee was required to input information that they were not privy to.)

I request the Commission grant significant time to allow employees and interested parties to openly pursue options for maintaining the facility, particularly as a stroke center and in many other areas vital to my community.

Regards,

Carl Landahl

Community Resident and Patient

landahl@speakeasy.net

To: Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board

From: Pharmacy Department of MetroSouth Medical Center

Thank you for allotting the time to listen to myself and others in regards to the potential closure of MetroSouth Medical Center, and the detrimental impact it will have on the community, its patients, and the neighboring healthcare systems. We in the pharmacy department represent not only employees of MetroSouth, but healthcare professionals dedicated to providing safe and effective medications to those in need. We firmly stand against the closure of this facility because it represents a vital resource to the city of Blue Island and its neighboring communities. A resource that cannot be taken for granted. A resource that is relied upon every day to treat disease states, save lives, and prevent further health complications.

MetroSouth being situated within the city of Blue Island offers value not only to its citizens and the citizens of neighboring cities, but to the fire department, the police department, the local high school, and elementary/middle schools in emergency situations. Its proximity to Interstate 57 has been of value with the increase in highway shootings that have been occurring in the Chicagoland area. Yes there are neighboring hospitals in the surrounding areas, but at an average of 5.86 miles away, these miles and minutes matter to a patient who is fighting to stay alive. Train tracks and dense traffic are some of the obstacles that will present a struggle to ambulances to transport patients to other facilities for treatment. Stroke, cardiac arrest, and myocardial infarction are just a few of the medical emergencies presenting to MetroSouth that require immediate intervention to provide the best possible outcome to a patient.

Like many of the departments at this facility, longevity of its employees and volunteers is one thing we are very proud of. One story in particular I feel embodies a lot of the compassion and work ethic a lot of us bring with us each and every day. Within the pharmacy department we have a 97 year old volunteer who has been with us since 1985. She volunteers 3 days a week for 8 hours a day. Before she dedicated her time in the pharmacy, she worked as a nurse in labor and delivery (1942 through 1984). She was a nurse's aide during nursing school (1939-1942) and even volunteered as a candy striper when she was in high school when the hospital was still known as St. Francis. Her selfless determination to give and provide care is the perfect example of the type of healthcare that is provided to this community.

I urge you to reconsider the application to close down operations at the hospital, and to do anything within your power to help keep MetroSouth Medical Center alive for the individuals that rely on it today, and the future generations that will rely on it for their healthcare needs.

Thank you for the opportunity. Sincerely

MetroSouth Medical Center Pharmacy Department

Message Body:

Memo: Public Hearing on E-024-19 to discontinue MetroSouth Medical Center, Blue Island

Speaker: Dr. Tina Decker, DNP, RN, CNS

Position: In Opposition to closure of MetroSouth

I, Dr. Tina Decker, Chair of the Department of Nursing at Trinity Christian College and Vice-Chair of the Illinois Association of Colleges of Nursing and speaking in opposition to the closure of MetroSouth Medical Center.

Currently there is a lot of effort in the state of Illinois to increase the number of nurses. Part of this is focused specifically at increasing the number of nursing students within the state. Specific examples are the Illinois Board of Higher Education offering grants specifically to "increase the number of registered nurses with high quality postsecondary credential to meet the demands of the Illinois economy." However, I can tell you that what nursing education needs more than money, is CLINICAL SITES. That is, more high-quality facilities where nursing students can get hands on experiences caring for patients in acute care settings. And MetroSouth offers just that. For as long as I can remember, MetroSouth and before that St. Francis has been partnering with Trinity Christian College's Bachelors of Science Nursing (BSN) program to offer high quality clinical placements that prepare the next generation of BSN nurses. If MetroSouth closes its doors, it would not be a situation where one door closes and another opens, it would be just another closed door that further limits the number of qualified students we can educate to be nurses in Illinois.

Another current issue of great effort in Illinois is to decrease maternal and infant mortality rates. This year there were numerous bills introduced in Illinois legislation responding to this issue. Just as recently as July 12, a new act was passed that creates a Taskforce on Infant and Maternal Mortality among African Americans. That act can be cited as saying "Black infants in America are more than twice as likely to die as white infants" and "Black women are three to four times more likely to die from pregnancy related causes." And when I hear these statistics, I instantly see faces, of the people I served as a nurse at MetroSouth Medical Center. I see the mother who came in actively hemorrhaging, who received an emergency cesarean section, and who survived along with her baby. Then I think about what it would mean to her to travel 10 more miles, or 12 more minutes, and if you ask me if she would've survived, the best I could say is "Just maybe". And today we have heard story after story of "Just maybe". The gunshot victim, the asthmatic child, the patient having a stroke, the patient having a heart attack all these stories we've already heard today. REAL people who are alive because of the care they received here? What is the value of their lives? 2 million in revenue loss the past few years? 8 million last year? 10 million next year? What is the value of all the lives that will be lost because of the decrease in access to quality healthcare.

Closure of MetroSouth would be in direct opposition to so much the people in this state are currently working towards with increasing the supply of nurses and decreasing maternal and infant mortality being just two examples. As such, I strongly speak in OPPOSITION to the closure of MetroSouth.

Respectfully,

Tina M. Decker

DNP, RN, CNSM

--

This e-mail was sent from a contact form on Robert Rita State Rep. (<http://robertbobrita.com>)

I would like to submit the **following testimony**:

My name is Dr. Brandon Hamilton, an 11-year resident of Calumet Park, and a consultant. I would like to share a consulting experience I had in Los Angeles in 1992 in the aftermath of the Rodney King Riots. Everybody remembers that the riots began the day the verdicts were announced and peaked in intensity over the next two days. What is not generally known is that a group of consultants gathered in the City of Compton to discuss the incident. I was one of those consultants. What we learned after 6 days of community meetings is that a root cause of the unrest was not rooted so much in the verdict as it was in the insufficient healthcare services in Compton, California. Residents in this neighborhood had to go as far as UCLA to get adequate medical treatment. Although these medical professionals were clinically trained, they were not empathic to the specific needs of this African American and Hispanic neighborhood. A task force was assembled that identified healthcare needs specific to Compton. We matched the needs of this neighborhood with skill sets and reconfigured the medical curricula of Drew University of Medicine and Science in Compton to specialties much in demand in this Southern California neighborhood. We became the medical center of choice for cycle cell treatment. We also learned that our emergency room skillsets were quite unique. Our trauma center was so efficient at 6 times the level of patients of any around the country that we were tasked at training soldiers of Desert Storm and Desert Shield. We should not let the situation in Blue Island get to a boiling point before implementing a similar study. I propose that we conduct a comparative analysis of all hospital services in the region and identify those unique services performed well at Metro South. As Drew University of Medicine and Science did, we should partner with nearby healthcare facilities as the outsource partner of choice because of these efficiencies.

I believe that if I share this story with the audience, people can visualize a similar positive outcome for Metro South.

[<savemetrosouth@gmail.com>](mailto:savemetrosouth@gmail.com)

---

**Letter of support**

1 message

Fri, Jul 19, 2019 at 10:02 AM

To: savemetrosouth@gmail.com

To whom it may concern-

My name is Julie Di Novo, and I am a registered nurse and resident of Blue Island. My husband grew up in Blue Island and his family roots go back over a century. We were attracted to the charm of the community, the high-quality services the City provides and its rich history. We are proud to call ourselves Blue Islanders.

The news of Metro South Medical Center closing was a total shock to my husband and me, along with the entire Blue Island community. The hospital cares for a large population of underfunded or unfunded patients, is easily accessible by public transit, and a pillar in our community. The hospital employs a large number of residents and indirectly increases traffic to local businesses like Flowers By Cathe' and T&Gs Gyros. Many of Metro South Medical Center's employees have worked there for over 30 years. They stayed at the hospital through its many owners and transitions. They had faith in their community hospital.

Further, the closing of the hospital will have a grave impact on our resident's access to care. They will have to travel further to receive emergency care or admission to the hospital.

Additionally, the Blue Island Fire Department does not offer ALS (Advanced Life Support) care. This means if a person has a heart attack, difficulty breathing, or a stroke the fire department cannot provide the advanced care to treat a patient with life-threatening symptoms. The fire department is not able to start an IV, place a breathing tube in a breathless patient or give life-saving cardiac drugs. The next closest facilities are Little Company of Mary, Ingalls Hospital, Palos Community Hospital and South Suburban Hospital. The travel times are much longer than Metro South. Without these advanced interventions, patient outcomes are likely to be dismal.

I urge the City of Blue Island, the County of Cook and the State of Illinois to take action to keep Metro South Medical Center open to continue to serve our residents.

Respectfully,

Julie Di Novo, MSN, RN

**[sara@blueislandchamber.org](mailto:sara@blueislandchamber.org)**

---

**From:** Laurie Michels  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 12, 2019 7:23 PM  
**To:** [sara@blueislandchamber.org](mailto:sara@blueislandchamber.org)  
**Subject:** Metro closing

Please help with keeping this hospital open. It is a must for this area.

**sara@blueislandchamber.org**

---

**From:** Wednesday, June 12, 2019 7:47 PM  
**Sent:** sara@blueislandchamber.org  
**To:** Closing of MetroSouth Hospital  
**Subject:**

I am unable to attend the June 13 meeting regarding MetroSouth Hospital because of a previously scheduled Doctor's Appointment at a MetroSouth office.

Please convey my opinion of the management decision to close the hospital to the government of Blue Island.

I worked at St. Francis Hospital/MetroSouth from 1978- 2014 . 36 years of service to Blue Island & surrounding communities.

There I made lifelong friendships of colleagues & Blue Island residents. I know from the position of employee , patient & family member what the Hospital means to Blue Island families & families of surrounding areas who chose SFH/MetroSouth over Ingalls or other hospitals within the " 10 mile radius" spoken of by MetroSouth's owners , implying it's not needed.

The hospital is vital to our community. It is one , if not the largest employer in BI.

Many of my colleagues still work there and are very near retirement , after their commitment of decades of service , where do they go now? Through it's employees , patients & visitors other BI businesses profited. The domino effect of closing MetroSouth will be devastating to all aspects of our community.

I know many have complained " it's not the same" since SFH sold to the billionaire conglomerate based in Tennessee. "

Well , that's because they never cared about the existing experienced employees or our community & most importantly the generations of patients & families served since 1905.

They were fully a " for profit business " in every way.

Please aid us in finding a buyer or healthcare group to merge with to keep this vital part of BI history here on Gregory Street. The people of Blue Island and its surrounding areas deserve it.

Respectfully ,  
Margaret Hillyard

Sent from my T-Mobile 4G LTE Device

Dear Mr. Rita and group,

7/19/2019

I am sorry I am unable to attend the meeting today about the future of Metro South Hospital in Blue Island. The former St. Francis Hospital has been a respected institution in Blue Island for as long as I can remember. I, along with my three siblings were all born there. All of my surgeries and family emergencies have been treated at Metro South Hospital with care and compassion. Many of the employees at the hospital have been there through the transitions from St. Francis to present. Their families' as well as ours, rely on the hospital to be there and support them. We cannot lose the accessibility and treatment in our community.

My mother, Lorraine Cavallini, a 36 year city worker spent her last days of 90 years there in Hospice care in February of 2018. Our expectant mothers with the youngest patients, all the way to the geriatric group NEED Metro South. PLEASE do not take our hospital from the Blue Island, South side community where it is needed!

I am sure the business owners in the community can extrapolate on the need for the hospital, it's benefit to the area businesses, but it's the citizens who are asking for your time and effort to find a way to keep the doors open! I shudder to think of the ripple a closing of this magnitude would cost us emotionally, spiritually and financially as an area home owner and resident!

Sincerely,  
Lori Campione  
Blue Island resident  
2541 Walnut Street

Hello,

So if we lose the hospital, what other injections of commerce can we bring to Blue Island? We've got Cook County Hospital going in at the end of Oak Street on Western now.

Can our Rep. work on getting the casino here? The article this week in the Southtown mentioned area cities vying for it, but we were not mentioned. We've got acreage up at 119th and also the old contaminated Clark Oil property to consider as sites.

Also, what about putting a DMV unit somewhere in town? Can our Rep. Rita work on getting either of these two or both into Blue Island's economy? Currently, we have to travel to King Drive for a full scale DMV. Midlo and Orland can not transfer plates, etc. There are services that are needed without resorting to the Currency Exchange and their exorbitant fees to procure plates, etc.

(Please withhold name upon this request and submit as anonymous)