



Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet

St. Paul Province

Commissioner Jan Malcolm
P.O. Box 64975
St. Paul, MN 55164-0975



April 20, 2018

Dear Commissioner Malcolm,

Does it matter if **St. Joseph's Hospital in St. Paul closes**? The ripple effect will be felt beyond St. Paul, the Twin Cities, the State of Minnesota and its borders.

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet have been involved in healthcare in Minnesota for 163 years. Though we no longer own or manage Fairview Health Service's St. Joseph's Hospital, we founded "St. Joe's" in 1853, five years before Minnesota became a state, in response to a cholera epidemic in St. Paul. Then as now, our concern is care for our "Dear Neighbors," particularly the poor and most vulnerable in our community.

When Health Partners (HP) and its hospital, **Regions**, recently requested an additional 100 beds requiring an exception to an existing hospital building moratorium, and Senator Michelle Benson's resulting **S.F. 2892** and Representative Joseph Schomacker's resulting **H.F. 3202**, we took note. We enjoy seeing area businesses grow, particularly those that help care for Minnesotans, but we are alarmed at how this seemingly simple exception could impact our whole state.

Our hope is that this **legislation will not be voted on** in the full house **until a complete and thorough assessment by the Department of Health assures all that this exception won't derail healthcare in Minnesota**. Ideally, the complete report will:

- Explain the original intent of the building moratorium
- Engage other area health systems, hospitals and appropriate support agencies including NAMI, to have a voice. This is particularly important given the impact this report will have on the entire community and state.
- Provide a needs analysis so that we can understand the implications of a moratorium exception on the State-wide healthcare delivery system.
- Give an independent, third-party perspective that legislators and government officials deserve to craft wise legislation on which a fully-informed full house can vote.

HP's report to the Department of Health (MDH) filed with its exception request states it does not "foresee any impact to nearby hospitals because our request is meant only to maintain market share" (p. 47). While we appreciate Region's outstanding work and contributions, our concerns include:

- We've been advised by Fairview Health Services that this exception may result in **the closure of its St. Joseph's Hospital in St. Paul**. (That would be a loss of approximately 200 active beds and about 1400 employees.) HP, an insurance company, will have the ability, through financial incentives and preferred physician referrals, to direct its highest paying patients (med/surg), to its own Regions Hospital creating unsustainable financial losses for St. Joseph's. While you may be handing HP and Regions a boost, you may be sounding the death knell for St. Joseph's, which would negatively impact the entire State's healthcare delivery system.

- **St. Joseph's currently dedicates 105 of its 200 inpatient beds to caring for patients experiencing mental health and chemical dependency crises.** While this isn't the highest reimbursement service, it is critical in light of the current opioid epidemic. **HP's request proposes an additional 20 beds for mental health in 2025.** This would not be enough to offset the loss sustained by a St. Joseph's closure.
- St. Joseph's is St. Paul's only Catholic Hospital.
- Data in HP's MDH report show that Regions discharges declined between 2012 and 2016 (graphs on p. 13 and 58). HP/Regions management, in a recent meeting with the Sisters of St. Joseph, indicated healthcare is changing dramatically and traditional hospital stays are being replaced with alternatives including day surgery, home care, and preventive care models. Again, this makes us wonder about the need for additional hospital beds in St. Paul.
- If granted, our concern is that this exception could limit access, harm patients, and hurt area community hospitals while directly benefitting Regions/HealthPartners over its competitors. This includes people suffering from mental health and addiction issues.

In the 165 years since the St. Paul Province of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet (CSJs) founded St. Joseph's Hospital, we have given our lives in service to our Dear Neighbors throughout St. Paul, Minnesota and beyond. While we are no longer involved in the St. Joseph's daily workings, we do still have a board that looks at St. Joseph's Catholic mission.

We are still involved in healthcare through St. Mary's Health Clinics, a Twin Cities system of free health clinics that support the most vulnerable in our community. While we support efforts to make healthcare more cost-effective and accessible, believing healthcare is a basic human right, we are concerned that this decision could disrupt healthcare services statewide.

We hope you will have the patience to allow the Department of Health to do its job thoroughly and completely and seek collaboration between existing providers to see if there is a way to support growth without penalizing our Dear Neighbors most in need. Thank you for considering our concerns.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Herder, CSJ *Cathy Steffens, CSJ* *Susan Hames, CSJ*
 Suzanne Herder, CSJ Cathy Steffens, CSJ Susan Hames, CSJ

The Leadership Team of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet

Mary Madonna Ashton, CSJ
 Sister Mary Madonna Ashton, CSJ,
 Former Minnesota State Commissioner of Health

Mary Nicholas Vincelli, CSJ
 Mary Nicholas Vincelli, CSJ,
 former Regional Director of Nursing for 19
 counties in South Texas, Texas State Department
 of Health

Moving always toward the profound love of God and love of neighbor without distinction.

This movement toward profound love began in France in 1650 when six women and one man tried something new. Without fanfare, they melted into the fabric of life, doing everything they could to help their Dear Neighbors. They returned to a kitchen, sharing their hearts and what they'd learned about the transformational power of love.

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet (CSJs) came to Minnesota in 1851.



Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet

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Sister Kevin Bogg, CSJ

Sister Mary Lamski, CSJ

Sister Donna Sklar, CSJ

Sister Monica Lubitz, CSJ