



Greg Kelley
President

February 15, 2023

Erica Bland-Durosinmi
Executive Vice-President

Good afternoon.

Maggie Laslo
Secretary-Treasurer

My name is Anne Igoe and I am here today representing SEIU Healthcare Illinois, a union of 90,000+ homecare, childcare, nursing home, and hospital workers including service and maintenance and technical employees at Northwestern Memorial Hospital.

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Our union is concerned about Northwestern Medicine's plan to spend \$388 million to expand and upgrade Lake Forest Hospital.

The project under discussion today would double the number of medical-surgical and intensive care beds at the hospital and relocate and expand the emergency department among other upgrades/additions.

SEIU Healthcare questions why Northwestern has chosen to prioritize expanding Lake Forest Hospital over bringing new services to Chicagoland's medically underserved communities, particularly when there is little need for this project. Northwestern Medicine claims the reason is high occupancy which tracks during 2020 and 2021 during the pandemic, however this has yet to be show that such high occupancy has continued in 2022 and 2023, and they have not been forthcoming with this data.

Board Chair:

Maria del Carmen Macias

In fact, the Illinois Department of Public Health and Health Facilities and Services Review Board's own metrics consider northern Lake County over bedded in both categories of service that Northwestern intends to expand.

Illinois

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The IDPH's most recent (2021) Inventory of Health Care Facilities and Services indicates that Hospital Planning Area A-09 (which includes Lake Forest Hospital along with four other short-term acute care facilities) currently has 24 excess medical-surgical beds and two excess ICU beds.

Indiana

1800 N. Meridian Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202
Phone: 317.927.9691

On top of that, Lake County, which encompasses Lake Forest Hospital's primary service area, is among the healthiest in Illinois.

Missouri

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The University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute's County Health Rankings & Roadmaps (CHR&R), which evaluates both health outcomes and health factors, ranks Lake County as the fifth healthiest of 102 Illinois counties.

According to CHR&R's latest analysis, Lake County residents are far less likely to be uninsured and have far greater access to primary care than other Illinoisans and (especially) Cook County residents.

Lake County has a longer life expectancy than neighboring Cook (81.0 versus 78.6 years, but as low as 60 in Chicago's South Side Englewood community) coupled with a much lower infant mortality rate of four infant deaths per 1,000 live births compared to six per 1,000 in Cook County.

All told, Lake County is statistically much healthier than its neighbor and the state of Illinois as a whole.

Lake County's comparatively excellent health reflects its affluence.

The county has a median household income of more than \$100K compared to \$71,200 statewide and \$71,600 in Cook County. Nearly three quarters of residents own their homes compared to 57% in Cook County.

As countless academic studies have shown, poverty is a key social determinant of health; consequently, people with higher incomes and greater wealth have better health outcomes. Lake County's health statistics bely this relationship. They also suggest that there is no urgent need for Northwestern's proposed expansion of Lake Forest Hospital.

So why does Northwestern want to spend nearly \$400 million to double the size of a hospital in an over bedded region serving some of the healthiest and wealthiest communities in Chicagoland?

Well their application states that "patient preference" is the reason, meaning the motivation is not one of need, but rather one of greed.

The proposed expansion of Lake County Hospital would give Northwestern much greater access to Lake County's disproportionately affluent and privately insured population.

It would also position the hospital to better compete with Advocate and NorthShore for these patients.

Northwestern Medicine is a mission driven nonprofit organization that receives substantial annual public support including valuable tax exemptions.

Shouldn't such an entity prioritize expanding access to care in vulnerable communities over trying to compete with other large health systems for the same vanishingly small pool of wealthy patients?

Or, at the very least, shouldn't Northwestern match each dollar spent on expanding services to healthy and wealthy communities with an equal investment toward expanded access to healthcare in vulnerable communities?

Our members believe so.

Northwestern Medicine has finally taken steps to open its first facility on Chicago's South Side, a \$163 million outpatient center in Bronzeville.

While we welcome this necessary (if long overdue) development, we are dismayed that the financial outlay is only a fraction of what Northwestern plans to spend expanding and retooling Lake Forest.

And while the proposed Bronzeville outpatient facility is a step in the right direction, South Siders (particularly those that work at Northwestern Memorial Hospital and return to communities where they cannot access necessary medical services) both require and deserve more.

Therefore, SEIU Healthcare opposes Application #22-047 unless Northwestern Medicine commits to make an equal investment in Chicagoland's truly medically vulnerable communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Anne Igoe, Director of Health Systems, SEIU Healthcare Illinois Indiana Missouri Kansas