



COMPTROLLER OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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WILLIAM C. THOMPSON, JR.
COMPTROLLER

February 12, 2009

Commissioner Richard Daines
New York State Department of Health
Corning Tower
Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York 12237

Dear Commissioner Daines:

I write to express my continuing concern regarding the New York State Department of Health's (SDOH) imminent and ill-advised closures of Mary Immaculate Hospital and St. John's Hospital in Queens. As you know, these closures are scheduled to occur by the end of this month despite there having been no public or inclusive discussion concerning transition plans and how these closures will affect the ongoing health and safety of area residents.

As I expressed to your office previously, and as further detailed in my recent report which I provided to your office analyzing the City's emergency care facilities, SDOH has not publicly disclosed its plans to address the consequences of these closures. SDOH has also failed to address concerns including how nearby emergency rooms such as the one at Jamaica Hospital will be able to absorb an expected 50 percent increase in demand. Additional concerns include whether appropriate notifications were provided to patients and whether there will be adequate coordination with culturally appropriate providers to ensure the continuity of care for out-patients.

The financial challenges confronting Mary Immaculate and St. John's Hospitals date to at least 2005 when the facilities were sold to Wyckoff Hospital. Since that time, SDOH has provided tens of millions of dollars in loans to assist the hospitals with their basic operating needs. Yet despite the evident weakness of these hospitals, SDOH has seemingly made little, if any, effort to engage the surrounding community and include stakeholders in its closure plans.

With the City's economy in decline, these closures are poorly timed from both a health care and economic perspective. As increasing numbers of City residents lose their jobs and health insurance, there will be significant demands on emergency rooms as City residents' access to primary care decreases. With capacity already strained, crowded

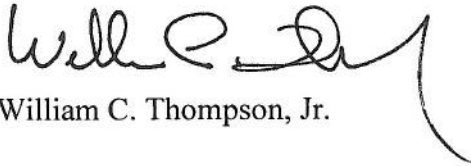
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emergency rooms mean longer wait times for patients, delayed ambulance response times, and possibly, diminished health outcomes. Because the patient mix at these two hospitals already includes many uninsured and under-insured individuals, it is unclear how remaining hospitals will absorb the financial impact of increased patient loads without commensurate reimbursement.

I strongly urge that you re-consider or delay the closures of these facilities until these issues are adequately addressed and there has been a fully transparent and inclusive dialogue with the affected communities and other stakeholders.

I look forward to your response.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William C. Thompson, Jr.", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

William C. Thompson, Jr.