

Queens Civic Congress Supporting Community on Hospitals Concerned about plans to close Mary Immaculate & St. John's

Queens Civic Congress through its Health and Human Services Committee has been actively engaged with the announced closing of Caritas' St. John's Hospital, Mary Immaculate Hospital and other associated facilities. The committees working position is as follows:

That the New York State Department of Health must insure that quality medical care is provided to the citizens of the catchment areas served by Mary Immaculate Hospital and St. John's Hospital. Care must be physically accessible in a reasonable time. This must be measured in time not miles. The provider of these services must have a payment flow that allows for sustainability.

The New York State Department of Health must not approve a closure plan for Caritas until:

- alternative replacement services are in place;
- a seamless plan that ensures continuity of care is in place;
- input from elected officials and community leader is obtained;
- the plan is widely shared and advertised to the communities to be affected.

Bases upon conversation with the NYS Deputy Commissioner of Health late Thursday afternoon, DOH position is they have provided 61 million dollars to keep these health facilities open and they do not have the dollars to provide any more assistance. The DOH will do it can to minimize the effects of these closure.

Caritas plans on diverting ambulances to other facilities as of February 14, 2009 and closing the hospital no later than February 28, 2009.

-Kevin Forrestal, Health & Human Services Chair, Queens Civic Congress
(President, Hillcrest Estates Civic Association)

(Posted 2009-02-13)

President's note: Queens Community Boards 5, 6 and 8 passed resolution supporting the community. The CB6 resolution, to be sent to all electeds, requests financial aid to keep hospitals open. The CB8 resolution text follows on the next page and CB5 the page after.

COMMUNITY BOARD 8 QUEENS RESOLUTION ON CARITAS

WHEREAS, Caritas Healthcare operates two hospitals, St. John's and Mary Immaculate;

WHEREAS, Caritas Healthcare's catchment area contains two zip codes within Community Board 8;

WHEREAS, over 200,000 individuals annually received essential care at the two hospitals;

WHEREAS, both hospitals are at full in-patient capacity of staffed beds;

WHEREAS, other nearby hospitals are at or over full capacity;

WHEREAS, Caritas employs approximately 2,500 individuals;

WHEREAS, Caritas Healthcare has not filed a Closure Plan with the New York State Department of Health as of Monday, February 9, 2009;

WHEREAS, Caritas Healthcare has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection as of Friday, February 6, 2009;

WHEREAS, Caritas has announced that it plans on stopping admissions no later than February 14, 2009 and will close the hospitals by February 28, 2009;

WHEREAS, Caritas is willing to continue operation if funding is made available;

WHEREAS, such actions will, to a high degree of probability, result in a health care crisis as it relates to hospital accessibility throughout Queens.

BE IT RESOLVED: That the New York State Department of Health must insure that quality medical care is provided to the citizens of the catchment areas served by Mary Immaculate Hospital and St. John's Hospital. Care must be physically accessible in a reasonable time. This must be measured in time not miles. The provider of these services must have a payment flow that allows for sustainability.

BE IT RESOLVED: The New York State Department of Health must not approve a closure plan for Caritas until:

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Hon. Elected Officials:

RE: CB5 Q Resolution concerning 2 Queens hospitals in great danger of closing: St. John's Queens Hospital in Elmhurst and Mary Immaculate Hospital in Jamaica

At our meeting of February 11, 2009, the members of Community Board 5, Queens unanimously voted in favor of the following Resolution:

Whereas, the Queens hospitals of St. John's and Mary Immaculate are in great danger of closing; and,

Whereas, eliminating 400 hospital beds, a Level 1 Trauma Center , a cancer care institute, a nursing home, and a vital hyperbaric oxygen therapy unit, in Queens County, seriously comprises the safety and health of many Queens residents; and,

Whereas, the combined hospitals' emergency rooms treated nearly 100,000 patients in 2008; and,

Whereas, Queens County has a shortage of hospital beds, especially when compared to Manhattan, and has already suffered the loss of Parkway Hospital, in Forest Hills, which closed this past year; and,

Whereas, up to 2,500 workers may lose their jobs, causing great hardship for them and their families and to the community they have served;

Therefore, be it resolved that our elected officials find a way to keep these hospitals open in the short term, and work for a longer term solution to keep these critically important hospitals solvent, and serving the communities where they are critically needed.

We implore you to do your utmost to keep these hospitals open, especially considering that both St. John's Queens Hospital is one of the few hospitals in Western Queens, and Mary Immaculate Hospital is of vital importance to the residents and business community in Jamaica, Queens.

Sincerely,
Gary Giordano, District Manager - CB5, Queens