



**Office of the Cook County Board President
Toni Preckwinkle**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, May 10, 2011

Contact: Jessey Neves - (312) 519-1499

**President Preckwinkle, commissioners issue statements regarding
restructure of Oak Forest Hospital**

Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle on Tuesday released the following statement in response to the Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board's denial of a request by the Cook County Health and Hospitals System (CCHHS) to discontinue inpatient care at Oak Forest Hospital:

"Despite the Board's decision, I remain committed to the comprehensive Vision 2015 Strategic Plan to provide quality medical services to Cook County residents. We hope this vote provides the Board with time to reevaluate the merits of our proposal. The transition of Oak Forest Hospital to the Regional Health Center at Oak Forest allows the facility to expand the services it offers and add primary care doctors to better serve the people of the south suburbs. On a broader level, these changes contribute to the sustainability of our County's Health and Hospitals System."

"I also want to reiterate my support for our County's Independent Health and Hospitals Board, which is charged with oversight of the Health and Hospitals System. Our public health care is in a critical period of transition and I am confident that this group is making decisions that benefit the residents of Cook County and ensure that we can continue to provide quality, accessible health care for those who need it for many years to come."

Many Cook County Board Commissioners also released statements regarding the vote this afternoon. The following are excerpts of comments released by their offices.

Commissioner Jerry Butler, 3rd District:

"I want to be on record in support of the conversion of Oak Forest and Provident Hospitals to Regional Outpatient Care Centers. The concept is part of the Health and Hospitals strategic plan which has been approved by both Cook County Health and Hospital System and the Cook County Board of Commissioners to carry out our mission of making the Cook County Health and Hospitals System more effective and less costly."

Commissioner Jesus "Chuy" Garcia, 7th District:

"I'm disappointed that the Health Facilities Board has voted against the decision of the Cook County Health and Hospital Systems Board to take taxpayer dollars to use on preventive care rather than waiting until people become real sick to provide healthcare services. The plan in place for an outpatient center at Oak Forest would accomplish this important goal."

Chairman John Daley, 11th District:

“The Independent Health Board first approved this plan, followed shortly by Cook County Board approval of the plan, and finally today the State Health Facilities Services Review Board has approved the plan. It's time to move forward, and focus efforts on implementing the Strategic Plan on a systemwide basis, to improve the quality of care for patients of all Cook County health facilities while keeping costs down.”

Commissioner Larry Suffredin, 13th District:

“The request before you is an opportunity to expand the services available and to improve the quality of services. For too long this facility with its many building structures has had more buildings than actual inpatients on any given day.”

“The plan for redeployment of Oak Forest will bring in more patients who will see more efficient treatment.”

Commissioner Gregg Goslin, 14th District:

“The Cook County Board has voted on a number of occasions to fully fund the CCHS Strategic Plan. The resources to create a new model of health care delivery are now available. To deny this request is to continue to limit the number of in-patients to an under 60 patient census and to limit our ability to treat more patients by better use of public resources.”

“I support the CCHHS Strategic Plan and believe converting Oak Forest to a Regional Center and shifting to outpatient services is the most responsible and cost effective option.”

“Currently Oak Forest Hospital costs \$100 million a year to operate, but averages only 50 to 60 patients a day. By any reasonable standards, this is not an efficient use of precious funds that become scarcer every year. By converting Oak Forest into a regional Center, the County can serve four times the number of patients while saving scarce dollars that can be reinvested in the healthcare environment in more responsive ways.”

Commissioner Timothy Schneider, 15th District:

"I fully support the Cook County Health and Hospital Board's efforts to bring our health system into the 21st century by focusing on primary care and expanding healthcare access to the people that need it most."

Commissioner Elizabeth “Liz” Doody Gorman, 17th District:

“Last summer I supported the strategic plan outlined by the Board President’s office and the goals it is attempting to accomplish to save taxpayer money. The plan called for Oak Forest Hospital to be transformed into an out-patient center to provide care for those in need.”

“I believe this can be accomplished without placing the community in danger. With an already comprehensive health and hospital system operated by the County of Cook and the exceptionally low ratio of patients to staff at Oak Forest Hospital, this facility can be turned into an out-patient care center without negatively impacting the health and welfare of the community.”

###