Dear XXXXX,

Cut backs in Medicare and Medicaid funding have forced most hospitals in our state to eliminate or reduce critical care services. Tragically the reduction of this vital funding is going to force more than twenty-five (25) hospitals in our state to close down all services and go out of operation by the end of this year. We have reached a crisis level with the reduction of hospital services throughout Illinois and several other "Industrial Rust Belt" states in the mid-west.

MetroSouth Medical Center in Blue Island, Illinois is a prime example of this unfolding medical tragedy. It is a for-profit hospital that lost several million dollars last year and is projecting a loss of more than eight million dollars this year. The parent company of MetroSouth is planning to close the hospital by the end of this year to improve the financial bottom line - to make it more attractive on the New York Stock Exchange.

For more than 100 years the hospital originally founded by the Sisters of St. Francis has served the needs of more than eighteen (18) communities and south Chicago neighborhoods with more than three hundred thousand citizens. But, when the MetroSouth organization took over operations, they reduced staff by roughly 40 to 60 doctors and began to cut back on vital services.

This area is a large part of the old south side industrial district. It has many railroad yards and active major rail lines passing through these communities. According to Fire Chiefs in this area, the Blue Island hospital can be reached very quickly because of an abundance of railroad overpasses and underpasses. The location is also close to several expressway access points which makes it the hospital of first choice for major highway accidents.

The horrible fact is that, this hospital no longer provides adequate Emergency or trauma service. Paramedic units in these towns will soon have to travel to either Christ Community Hospital in Oak Lawn or University of Chicago Medical Center in the Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago. In addition to the significant increase in travel time for Emergency vehicles there is the added problem of significant delays caused by two major north south rail lines that traverse the western portion of our area and impede access to the hospital in Oak Lawn.

Access to the University of Chicago is often impeded by very heavy urban traffic congestion. These types of delays reduce the potential of recovery and increase medical costs for treating heart, stroke, and accident victims. Paramedics from communities south of Harvey will soon have to transport critical cases either to Kankakee or Mokena – that’s too far.

Three hundred thousand Illinois citizens need to have the Blue Island hospital re­ established under modem new management as a "Safety Net" hospital. Please help.

Very truly yours,