

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 8, 2018

Bernie Sherry
Senior Vice President
Ascension
400 W River Woods Pkwy
Glendale, WI 53212

Dear Mr. Sherry,

I write regarding Ascension's St. Joseph hospital, which serves as a critical health care access point for central and downtown Milwaukee. I am encouraged that Ascension recently announced that it would not be moving forward with its plan to discontinue certain inpatient care services at the hospital. Access to acute care, emergency services and primary care is essential to residents in the St. Joseph's neighborhood, many of whom are vulnerable families struggling to get ahead. In order to strengthen access to needed services for area residents and move forward to improve and maintain care at St. Joseph's, I request that Ascension engage in a robust community engagement effort.

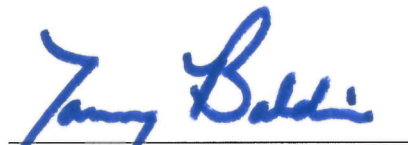
I am concerned that any disruptions in services for patients of the greatest need would disproportionately impact the health of the Milwaukee community. St. Joseph's serves almost 75,000 patients a year in its Emergency Department, which is one of the busiest in the city. Furthermore, St. Joseph's is one of only two remaining safety net access points for patients in the downtown and central areas of the city, primarily serving patients on Medicaid, and has a responsibility to provide acute care. I agree that improving quality and access to comprehensive health services for our most vulnerable requires health systems to evolve to meet the needs of the communities they serve. However, efforts to modernize care effectively require that our health providers prioritize fostering a strong community of trust among patients, health professionals and local partners.

As Ascension works to enhance its delivery of services at St. Joseph's, I request that you develop a robust plan to engage and to work in partnership with the Milwaukee community to advance care successfully. Such efforts should include consulting with local leaders, residents, health professionals, patients as well as other local health care stakeholders concerning how to address community needs. Please provide me with your community engagement plan and keep me updated on your efforts. In addition, please provide me with the following information as you move forward:

- What local partners, leaders, community organizations and health care stakeholders does the leadership of St. Joseph's plan to meet with moving forward?
- Will your leadership hold public meetings with local residents served by St. Joseph's, and on what dates will these meetings take place?
- How does your leadership plan to address and maintain both acute as well as primary and behavioral health needs of local residents?
- Does Ascension have any plans to reduce acute and inpatient care services at St. Joseph's moving forward?

Please know that I am committed to making sure that all Wisconsin families have access to quality, affordable and comprehensive health services that meet their needs. But, we cannot do this alone, so I look forward to continuing to work together to strengthen the health security of the Milwaukee community. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator