

Oct. 10, 2018, Testimony of the Brookland Neighborhood Civic Association

TESTIMONY OF THE BROOKLAND NEIGHBORHOOD CIVIC ASSOCIATION (BNCA)

DC CITY COUNCIL, COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

HEARING: "THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH'S ROLE IN APPROVING PROVIDENCE HOSPITAL'S PROPOSED ELIMINATION OF ACUTE CARE SERVICES AND THE IMPACT ON THE DISTRICT'S EMERGENCY HEALTH CARE SYSTEM"

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2018

10:00 A.M., ROOM 500, JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING  
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004

Written Testimony of Daniel Schramm, President, BNCA:

Thank you for holding this hearing, which is really about the future of health care in Northeast DC. My name is Dan Schramm, and I am the President of the Brookland Neighborhood Civic Association. We are an all-volunteer, non-profit organization that exists for the betterment of the Brookland community. We are not health care experts, but we know that access to good health care is a basic right of every person. So it is important that whatever choices are made regarding Providence Hospital are made with the best interests of the community at heart.

Right now, there is a palpable sense among many residents of Brookland that the City is failing Northeast DC. The City is failing to adequately plan for new development in a way that does not displace or diminish the quality of life of current residents. The City is making ad hoc decisions on social services and housing projects, which although critically important, do not appear to be organized around any rational set of criteria. Indeed, the loss of this hospital – a critical piece of our civic infrastructure – may be happening because its owner, Ascension, based in St. Louis, decided it could better capitalize on this particular real estate holding with some mixed-use upscale shopping and dining, rather than a hospital to serve the poor.

In short, Northeast DC seems to be perpetually suffering from a failure of investment, comprehensive planning, and public-interest decision making. The closure of this hospital is both a microcosm of that failure and one of its greatest tragedies to-date. In place of a community-driven process, we experience daily a sort-of laissez faire hope from city agencies that private companies will supply everything the community needs. But the private marketplace cannot be expected to do this; Ascension, with its \$1.6 billion in profits last year, cannot be expected to do this – at least not without significant oversight.

The closure of Providence Hospital is rife with unanswered questions. Will the residents of Wards 5 through 8 continue to have access to sufficient in-patient health care? It's not clear; no one has come to speak with us about the ramifications of the closure of this major facility. The sheer number of job losses among doctors and nurses suggest that a shift to "community-based

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behavioral care and population health” will probably not lead to improved “health outcomes” here. But no one has really explained the meaning or data underlying all the happy-talk and the corporate jargon. Worse, it sounds like Ascension doesn’t really know what these terms mean either.

Meanwhile, we know that Medicaid recipients and other less affluent residents are reliant on a base of health care resources in the eastern half of DC that is shrinking and has never been properly funded to begin with. We do not have adequate urgent-care or neighborhood medical facilities. We don’t even have the necessary information from the City to know what our needs are. But the loss of Providence is certainly not a step in the right direction.

Perhaps, if it goes through, the closure of Providence can at least prompt an accounting of this community’s health needs that is surely long overdue. Thank you.