

Zufall Health Center
Comments on the Transfer of Ownership to Prime Healthcare Services
July 22, 2014

Good evening. I'm **Eva Turbiner**, President and Chief Executive Officer of Zufall Health Center, a Federally Qualified Health Center, with seven offices and a mobile medical van serving six counties in Northwest New Jersey. In 2013, the Health Center served almost 21,000 patients with 70,000 visits for primary medical, dental and supportive services. Our patients are among the most vulnerable and medically underserved in the region. More than 65% are uninsured; 90% have incomes under 200% of the federal poverty level; and more than half need services in a language other than English. I am here today in support of the transfer of ownership of Saint Clare's Health System to Prime Health, albeit with a number of concerns and a request that the transfer be subject to specific conditions.

Because the vast majority of Zufall's 21,000 patients reside in Morris County, we work very closely and successfully with the Saint Clare's Health System. We consider the existence of the Saint Clare's system to be essential to the well being of our patients. Our physicians are on the Hospital staff, we accept referrals from their Emergency Departments and discharge planners for individuals who do not have a primary care provider. We also send patients to Saint Clare's for diagnostic imaging, including breast cancer diagnostic services, lab, emergency, prenatal and obstetrical care, behavioral health and rehabilitation services. Access to those services is critical for our patients, particularly for those low-income uninsured patients who qualify for charity care. It is crucial that those services remain available and affordable. It is Zufall's recommendation that the maintenance of those services and the continued provision of charity care be a condition of the transfer of ownership.

We believe that Zufall Health Center is satisfactorily meeting the primary medical care needs of the low-income residents Saint Clare's service area, with the exception of the Sussex Hospital location, where Zufall does not yet have a full-time practice. We do not see a need to reinstitute primary care services at the hospital facilities in Morris County, although there will be a need to closely coordinate patient transfer between Zufall and Saint Clare's. For Sussex County, we are requesting that Prime Health be required to work with Zufall or another

safety net provider to insure primary care access, including urgent care, for the medically indigent.

Most importantly, Zufall Health Center does not provide specialty services within the service area, and we see the lack of specialty, particularly surgical services for the low-income, predominantly minority population as a major contributor to disparate health outcomes in the region. Zufall looks to our partner hospitals to provide services that, as a primary care provider, we are unable to offer to the low-income population. It is our understanding that hospitals have the requirement to arrange for such outpatient access if they have the inpatient service. With the exception of obstetrical care and some cancer-related services, access to specialty physician services is severely lacking in the Saint Clare's service area.

With this transfer of ownership to Prime Health, I see an invaluable opportunity to expand services within Morris County community and provide care to individuals who do not have access to the transportation necessary to travel for needed services. We would strongly advocate that the obligation to provide local access to specialty and surgical care be a condition of the proposed new ownership.