



June 20, 2017

Ms. Cathleen D. Bennett, Commissioner
State of New Jersey Department of Health
P.O. Box 360
Trenton, NJ 08625-0360

Dear Commissioner:

We, members of the clergy, would like to request a meeting with you to discuss the healthcare crisis in Jersey City and how the New Jersey Department of Health can take steps to resolve some of the issues we are concerned about.

Even though Jersey City has enjoyed steady growth over the last decade, significant health disparities exist among the city's 250,000 residents. Hudson County ranks last in New Jersey when it comes to access to quality clinical care. 23% of adults report poor or fair overall health, in part due to a troubling ratio of primary care providers to population (1870 to 1). From 1997 to 2014, there were approximately 104,487 premature deaths in Hudson County alone compared to approximately 99,798 statewide for the same period. In its 2017 County Health Rankings, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation estimated that there will be approximately 5,000 premature deaths in Hudson County compared to 5,500 statewide. Though the current projected 5,000 premature deaths represent a decline from the 1997 8,291 premature deaths, they nonetheless still remain high.

Poor management of chronic illnesses such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes and stroke is prevalent city-wide, while instances of sexually-transmitted infections are at near outbreak level. The teen birth rate is nearly double the state rate, and almost half of women in Hudson County receive inadequate prenatal care.

A careful and thoughtful discussion must take place in order to eliminate any threat of escalating health care disparities in Jersey City.

The results of this health crisis have contributed to and helped to create an unhealthy business environment for some hospitals (due to falling charity care reimbursements and other financial and regulatory issues) prompting many of them to close or bail out of Jersey City - leaving thousands of low-income residents of Jersey City without adequate medical and hospital care. Has the replacement of those hospitals by other operators contributed to the declining of premature deaths?



Communities like Greenville in Jersey City have been waiting in vain for promised health care services since Jersey City Medical Center (JCMC) closed Greenville Hospital in 2008. At the same time as paying lip service to the needs of the African-American Community JCMC is moving full speed ahead to build a new Satellite Emergency Department (SED) in Bayonne four blocks away from an existing full-service hospital. If JCMC cares so much about the future of community healthcare in New Jersey they should be building new services in Greenville, not building an emergency department that is not needed in Bayonne.

As there can only be one Satellite Emergency Room to replace Greenville Hospital under state regulation we urge the Department to **deny JCMC's application** to open a SED in Bayonne and **urge them (or another provider) to open in Greenville where it belongs.**

Please let us know which of the following dates would be best to meet with you for further discussion of the healthcare crisis in Jersey City and the county in general:

June 27, 2017 11:00 am

June 28, 2017 2:00 pm

June 29, 2017 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

July 5, 2017 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

July 6, 2017 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. Steffie Bartley
Rev. Vincent Thomas
Rev. Phillip Webb
Rev. Patricia A DeGraphenreid
Rev. Nolan M. Doby
Rev. Dr. Alonzo Perry, Sr.
Rev. Frances Teabout
Rev. Alando Bic
Rev. Kevin White
Rev. Robert Keith
Rev. Joe Carter
Rev. Vanessa Nero
Pastor Johnny McCann

Rabbi Abe Friedman
Rev. Jerry Smith
Rev. Gerard Hart
Rev. Vincent M. Rouse
Rev. Terrell Turner
Rev. Milton Biggham
Bishop Jethro James
Rev. Joseph Adair
Brother Frank McMillan
Bishop Glen A. Colley
Minister Patricia Cleveland
Minister Monica Riley