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**COMMISSION ON GOVERNMENT**  
**FORECASTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

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October 31, 2011

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** The Honorable Patrick Quinn, Governor, State of Illinois  
The Honorable John Cullerton, President of the Senate  
The Honorable Michael Madigan, Speaker of the House of Representatives  
The Honorable Christine Radogno, Minority Leader of the Senate  
The Honorable Tom Cross, Minority Leader of the House of Representatives  
The Honorable Jesse White, Secretary of State  
Michelle R. B. Saddler, Secretary, Illinois Department of Human Services

**RE:** Advisory Opinion of the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability  
Regarding the Closure of the H. Douglas Singer Mental Health Center

The Commission met on Thursday, October 27, 2011 at 8:00 am to take final action on the proposed closure of the H. Douglas Singer Mental Health Center (Singer MHC) and to accept or reject the recommendation for closure submitted by the Department of Human Services for that facility. The Commission, on a vote of 8-3, rejected the recommendation by the Department of Human Services to close the H. Douglas Singer Mental Health Center in Chester, Illinois. A copy of the motion to reject the recommendation for closure and the vote tally is attached.

**INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

The Department of Human Services officially notified the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability (the Commission) of the intent to close the H. Douglas Singer Mental Health Center (Chester) on September 8, 2011. According to the State Facilities Closure Act (30 ILCS 608/5-10): "In the case of a proposed closure of: (i) a prison, youth center, work camp or work release center operated by the Department of Corrections; (ii) a school, mental health center, or center for the developmentally disabled operated by the Department of Human Services; or (iii) a residential facility operated by the Department of Veterans' Affairs, the Commission must require the executive branch officers to file a recommendation for closure. The recommendation must be filed within 30 days after the Commission delivers the request for recommendation to the State executive branch officer."

The Commission requested the required recommendation on September 14, 2011. The Department of Human Services submitted the recommendation for closure to the Commission on September 16, 2011. Following the State Facility Closure Act requirements for conducting a public hearing within 35 days after the filing of the recommendation and no more than 25 miles from the facility, the Commission conducted a public hearing regarding the closure of the Singer Mental Health Center on October 5, 2011 at 4:30 P.M. at the University of Illinois – Rockford School of Medicine in Rockford, Illinois.

The H. Douglas Singer Mental Health Center operates in Rockford, Illinois and takes in a variety of patients. These patients range from individuals with short-term care needs to patients throughout the state who have been convicted/charged with crimes to patients formerly from other institutions. Singer MHC contains 76 beds for patients and is utilized at a rate of 94%, according to witness testimony from the October 5 Commission hearing. Singer MHC is also responsible for admissions from 23 counties in northern-northwestern Illinois. According to the Department of Human Services (DHS), the functions and patients at Singer would be moved to other existing facilities. The Alton, Chicago Read, Elgin and McFarland Mental Health Centers will all expand responsibilities to account for the Singer closure. The Department also notes that as a result of this closure, the State of Illinois will lose a significant amount of capacity for civil acute inpatient psychiatric care, which is estimated to total 845 civil admissions annually.

151 employees currently work at the Singer MHC. DHS has stated in their communications with the Commission that they do not know the impact of the closure on their employees until the final closure agreement is negotiated (according to their September 16 response to the Commission). The Department has estimated the annual cost of operating the Singer MHC at \$13.6 million, which will not be enough to fill the gap in their budget between their requested allocation and the final allocation approved by the General Assembly.

Similar to the issues surrounding the proposed Chester MHC closure, it is likely that community-based medical and mental health providers will be called upon to increase their efforts to accommodate the changes in mental health care provided by Illinois state facilities. However, DHS has stated that they will provide minimal funding to serve persons in community-based settings under the proposed Singer MHC closure. This indicates that these smaller operations will have to increase their responsibilities for state patients but will receive limited assistance from the state in this endeavor.

The Department of Human Services has provided the Commission with a report commissioned through the University of Illinois to analyze the economic impact of the proposed closure of the Singer MHC. According to the report, Singer employs 164 people (this number differs from the number of staffers provided to the Commission by the Department, but for the purposes of understanding the report, the number of 164 will be used). These jobs create 108 additional jobs in the surrounding community and region. These additional jobs would include support positions and additional employees that would be needed to work with the Singer MHC employees. Utilizing the metrics from the University of Illinois report, it is estimated that the Singer MHC also provides a significant amount of tax revenues to the state of Illinois. The report estimates that Singer MHC is responsible for approximately \$295,000 in state sales taxes and \$145,000 in state income taxes. The report also notes that the economic impact of closing the Singer MHC will have other components that are not measured, including potentially reduced local charity finances and school enrollment.

The Commission noted that the Singer MHC is quite cost-effective in their task compared to the alternatives that would be utilized in the event of closure. In addition, the Singer facility serves a large area of Illinois that would have no coverage from a similar facility in the event of the proposed closure. The costs of moving the individuals currently served by Singer would also be expensive, according to statements by Commission members.

The Commission noted the concern on the part of community organizations in regards to handling the inflow of individuals from the Singer MHC in the event of a closure. The Department of Human Services does not keep track of where psychiatric beds would be available in the private sector. The Department was also unable to provide cost information on the cost of relocating patients to the private sector versus treatment at continued treatment at Singer MHC. Given the limited financial assistance available from the state of Illinois in this fiscal year, these organizations would have significant difficulties in handling additional individuals while attempting to balance expenses with less money from the state than in the past.

It was mentioned at the Commission meeting on October 27, 2011 that the lack of acute psychiatric beds in the event of the closure of the Singer MHC is a matter of great concern. In addition, given the limited time-frame for evaluation of the closure recommendation, the Commission noted that it would be difficult at best to determine an optimal situation and recommendation.

After hearing testimony from the Department of Human Services and numerous other individuals and organizations, the majority of the Commission (on an 8-3 vote) voted to reject the Department of Human Services recommendation to close the H. Douglas Singer Mental Health Center.

Sincerely,



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Senator Jeffrey M. Schoenberg



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Representative Patricia R. Bellock

# MOTION 1 VOTE

## H. DOUGLAS SINGER MENTAL HEALTH CENTER

Meeting Date: Thursday, October 27, 2011 - 8:00 a.m.

Room 400, Capitol Building

Commission Member	YES	NO
Representative Patricia Bellock (R)		✓
Senator Michael Frerichs (D)		✓
Representative Kevin McCarthy (D)		
Senator Matt Murphy (R)		✓
Representative Elaine Nekritz (D)	✓	
Representative Raymond Poe (R)		✓
Representative Al Riley (D)		✓
Senator Suzi Schmidt (R)		✓
Senator Jeffrey Schoenberg (D)	✓	
Senator David Syverson (R)		✓
Senator Donne Trotter (D)	✓	
Representative Michael Tryon (R)		✓
<b>VOTE: MOTION 1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>

3

8

MOTION: NEKRITZ

SECOND MOTION: TROTTER

→ MOTION TO CLOSE SINGER MENTAL HEALTH CENTER