

To: Honorable Members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Human Services  
From: Melissa Ferrario, RN, President, NAGE Local 79  
RE: Eleanor Slater Hospital Redesign Proposal / Testimony

My name is Melissa Ferrario, and I am the President of NAGE Local 79, which represents state Registered Nurses. The Eleanor Slater Hospital's budget is under review, and by and large everyone is aware of the financial hardship it presents for the State of RI. As I understand it, multiple scenarios are being considered, one being that the Zambarano Hospital in Burrillville, which is a part of BHDDH, would remain open, while the Regan building in Cranston, also a part of BHDDH, would close. Unfortunately, this would create even more of a financial hardship for the State than our current situation.

Zambarano Hospital was built in 1905. It is old, dilapidated, and not nearly as up to date as the Regan building, which was constructed in 1962. Also, when there is medical emergency at Zambarano, the closest acute hospital is more than 20 miles away, and if it's a cardiac event or something similar, the closest trauma center is 30 miles away. On the other hand, Regan is less than 10 miles away, and is centrally located.

In addition, Zambarano is not equipped to take care of psychiatric patients, which is one of the main reasons the state opened its doors in the early 1900s. Currently, it has far too many ligature dangers for patients who wish to harm themselves. Also, the renovations that would be required to bring Zambarano to code for that patient population would cost millions of dollars

Regan also has a ventilator-dependent unit, Regan 5, which cares for ALS patients, traumatic brain injuries, drug overdoses and other diagnoses, which require the patients be dependent on a ventilator to live. Regan 5 has respiratory therapists with nursing staff for round the clock care. It is a specialized unit with state-of-the-art equipment, which Zambarano cannot accommodate due to the age of the building and its outdated electrical system. Updating the building to accommodate a ventilator-dependent unit was discussed previously, and the price again would be extremely high.

To summarize, it is not fiscally responsible to keep a 115-year-old building open and then attempt to renovate it, when it doesn't even have individual sinks in the patients' rooms. Medical and psychiatric patients are being well cared for right now in Regan, and the staff, in most cases, are like their families. If this is all about the care of the patients, and what is best for them, it is clear that the Regan building should remain open. Fiscally speaking, it is also the best course of action for the taxpayers of the State of Rhode Island.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.