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FROM COUNCIL MEMBER **TONY AVELLA**



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Press Release

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Avella, Gotbaum, and Hospital Employees Urge Governor Paterson and NYS DOH to Provide Funding to Keep Mary Immaculate & St. John's Hospital Open

Today, Councilman Tony Avella and Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum held a rally on the steps of City Hall with employees of Mary Immaculate and St. John's Queens Hospitals, as well as local Queens residents to urge Governor David Paterson and the New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH) to provide the necessary funding to keep the hospitals open. If the hospitals close approximately 2,500 workers will lose their jobs and the health and safety of the community will be severely impacted.

Mary Immaculate Hospital is a level one trauma center, which serves the underinsured and undocumented population of Jamaica Queens. This facility also houses a Cancer Institute and a 115 bed Nursing Home.

St. John's Queens Hospital in Elmhurst is a certified Stroke and Heart Failure Center. This facility has the only Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy Unit within the Queens borders. In 2008, St. John's Queens Hospital alone had 48,000 emergency room visits, 7,000 surgeries, 1,227 deliveries, 14,000 discharges and 50,245 clinic visits.

"The closing of Mary Immaculate and St. John's Hospitals would not only have a detrimental effect on the 2,500 hospital employees employed by Caritas Healthcare, but also on the entire Borough of Queens, which relies heavily on their medical services. I implore Governor Paterson and NYS DOH Commissioner Richard Daines to provide the necessary funding to keep these hospitals open. Failure to do so would take the livelihood away from hospital employees during an economic crisis and also drastically reduce the level of health care for Queens residents," stated Avella.

Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum stated, "St. John's Queens and Mary Immaculate Hospitals are vital to their community and every viable option must be explored before they are closed down. We should not risk putting excessive strain on surrounding hospitals and jeopardizing New Yorkers' health and safety by closing such intensely needed facilities. We must work together with every level of government and come up with a creative solution to keep these hospitals up and running."

"Who is going to take all these patients? The public system is already stressed," stated St. John's Hospital Nursing Manager Lisa Grippo.

"Everybody thinks it's so easy for a nurse to get a job. There's nothing out there," stated St. John's Hospital Nurse Lorraine Mojica.

"The loss of these two hospitals will undoubtedly overburden the already deeply strained hospital system in Queens and potentially create a healthcare crisis," concluded Avella.