

March 27, 2018

Testimony by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet in opposition of House File 3202 presented to the Health and Human Services Policy Committee, Chairman Representative Joseph Schomacker

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, good morning. I'm Ann Thompson speaking on behalf of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet in St. Paul, or as we're often referred to, CSJs. I also want to introduce Sister Suzanne Herder, a member of our leadership team.

OK. In reference to House File 3202. To be clear, the CSJs have nothing against Regions being successful and growing their business. What we do have concerns about is a lack of understanding about the ramifications of this decision. Very likely the addition of 100 beds at Regions could end up closing St. Joe's Hospital.

The Sisters have been in St. Paul since 1851. In 1853 the City of St. Paul experienced a cholera epidemic. The Sisters did what they were founded to do many hundreds of years ago—respond to the needs of the times. The Students at St. Joseph's Academy moved out of the log cabin chapel that St. Paul took its name from and the cholera patients moved in. St. Joseph's Hospital was born.

When a ministry the Sisters establish gets healthy enough, the Sisters move on to other things and let the organization carry on the Sisters' mission. That's how it was with St. Joe's Hospital, St. Catherine University, The Academy of Holy Angels, Derham Hall High School, now Cretin Derham Hall High School and so many more.

Today, the Sisters aren't involved in the Hospital's day-to-day operations though we do have a group that informs the Hospital's mission. So we appreciated when they recently informed us that the hospital would create 105 beds to address a currently unmet need in our community: mental health & chemical dependency. Just yesterday, more than one Sister specifically mentioned their concern for people suffering from meth and opioid addictions. Think about it. Do you know someone struggling to make it on this sometimes excruciatingly challenging planet we call Earth? From the Sisters perspective, this was a good move.

So. Should you care about St. Joe's? We believe you care about those in need in St Paul. And the Twin Cities. And Minnesota. We understand the Department of Health is working on a report to assess the impact of Region's request. That's a great idea. We can't help but wonder if it would be helpful to at least peak at that report before deciding to grant this exemption to the building moratorium.

Sure, it's exciting to see growth in St. Paul. We all love that. But maybe, instead of a plan that puts the growth of one organization above the best interests of this entire community, we could recommend at least considering collaboration.

At minimum, we ask you to consider waiting on a decision until the Department of Health's report can give you what you need to create wise legislation that will serve the highest and best interests of our entire beloved St. Paul community. On behalf of the Sisters and on behalf of all those who won't have a chance to weigh in on this issue we thank you for listening.