



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
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**TESTIMONY OF SENATOR STEVEN A. BADDOUR (D-METHUEN)
ON CERBERUS ACQUISITION OF CARITAS CHRISTI CARE NETWORK
JUNE 29, 2010**

Thank you for being here today to accept public testimony about the future of the Caritas Christi Health Care network and specifically Holy Family Hospital here in Methuen.

By way of introduction, my name is Steven A. Baddour and I am the State Senator for the First Essex District – representing the communities of Methuen, Haverhill, North Andover, Merrimac, Amesbury, Newburyport and Salisbury – all communities that benefit by the presence of Holy Family Hospital in our region.

As a former Assistant Attorney General, I am happy to be in my shoes and not yours. The task you have before you is critically important to the health and welfare of the Merrimack Valley and the State and I know that you will perform your review with the utmost scrutiny and care. Thank you for doing so.

I am here today to express my deepest support for Cerberus' proposed acquisition of the Caritas Christi Health Care network and to ask that you approve this transition as quickly as possible so that our region can receive the financial, economic and health benefits that will be gained through this purchase.

Holy Family Hospital is a local institution and a key part of our community. The Hospital is the City's single largest employer and provides 1,500 jobs to area residents. For this reason alone, we need to keep the Hospital vibrant and growing.

The infusion of capital provided by the acquisition will allow the hospital to construct a new \$21 million Emergency Department – a critically needed project. Last year, over 40,000 people visited their emergency room. Incredibly, 60% of hospital admissions come through those doors and the extra capacity will ensure that patients receive timely access to medical attention in a modern facility. This project is immediate proof that Cerberus is committed to providing locally-based, high-quality, low cost health care.

New funding will also permanently secure the pension of almost 13,000 current and former Caritas employees. At a time when I see families and seniors struggling to pay the bills because their retirement savings were wiped out with the financial crash that began in 2008 – I think this is a piece of the acquisition deal that should not be overlooked or downplayed.

Locally, the conversion of the hospital from a not-for-profit institution to a taxable entity will generate much needed tax revenue for Methuen. I realize that talking about money generated from providing health care can be dangerous territory, but if the hospital can still provide the same tremendous range of quality services at low cost - and - the City can yield a financial benefit – then we would be foolish to not support the hospital's acquisition.

As I mentioned at the outset, Holy Family Hospital has deep roots in our community. Its employees have deep roots in our community. In addition to offering free community health programs for both cancer care and diabetes – the staff supports and offers events at local senior centers, Elder Services, our schools and emergency responders. All tremendous and valuable programs that Cerberus has pledged to maintain.

However I hope to push the new owner to expand and grow new community-benefits programs, targeted at some of the issues I, and others, care so deeply about. Personally, I would like to see Holy Family initiate programs in our schools to promote good nutrition and combat childhood obesity. Let's not just wait to screen adults for diabetes when they are older – let's work on changing the eating habits of our kids now so that they never have to worry about contracting diabetes. I hope that Holy Family can partner with our schools to start our own food revolution to offer healthy foods and help educate children and their parents about good choices. I would like for the hospital to initiate a program as it relates to childhood asthma. Unfortunately, children in our area have some of the highest rates of asthma and we need to do more to work with families to prevent and manage this debilitating disease. I believe the hospital needs to have a much stronger presence in the lives of working families, particularly those with children.

And that issue, brings me to my most personal connection to the hospital. My children. Seven and nine years ago, my wife and I had our children, Isabella and Victoria, at Holy Family Hospital. Those of you who are parents can attest that nothing is more life changing than when you have your own children. Your world changes and you begin to view life very differently. You realize that the expression – if you don't have your health, you have nothing – is truer than words can express.

And so I wonder today, what the hospital of the future will be for them. I hope and believe that this purchase will ensure that my entire family will continue to receive locally-based, state of the art, affordable health care throughout our lives.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on this critically important issue.