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SOUTH BEND
801 East LaSalle Avenue
South Bend, Indiana 46617
574.237.7111

MISHAWAKA
215 West 4th Street
Mishawaka, Indiana 46544
574.259.2431

PLYMOUTH
1915 Lake Avenue
Plymouth, Indiana 46563
574.936.3181

*SAINT JOSEPH
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES*
4215 Edison Lakes Parkway
Mishawaka, Indiana 46545
574.237.7111
574.247.8700 fax

*SAINT JOSEPH
PHYSICIAN NETWORK*
810 East Park Place
Mishawaka, Indiana 46545
574.472.6760
574.472.6774 fax

www.sjmed.com

February 25, 2009

The Honorable Richard G. Lugar
306 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Lugar:

On behalf of Saint Joseph Regional Medical Center, I write to ask again your consideration of a request for FY 2010 federal funding assistance of \$700,000 through the Department of Health and Human Services to support the implementation of a critical health information technology initiative. The original request of \$2 million over two years has been submitted over the last several years. In FY 2008, \$300,000 was secured in the Labor, HHS, and Education Appropriations Bill. We are very grateful for the Indiana Delegation's leadership and support, which resulted in this award.

Specifically, Saint Joseph Regional Medical Center is seeking the remaining federal partnership funding to enhance patient care through the automation of our intensive care units and implementation of a bedside "barcode" technology for the administration of drugs. These technologies are components of an integrated, system-wide initiative designed to improve patient care, ensure quality, increase efficiency, and eliminate medical errors.

The health information technologies that SJRMC is seeking to implement will build upon nearly six years of efforts that have resulted in a core set of advanced systems in our hospitals. In April 2008, we went "live" with several core components, including a system-wide electronic health record, computerized physician order entry, clinical decision support tools, and business/financial systems in each of four SJRMC hospitals.

Additional clinical components are being phased in over the next 2 to 3 years with the support of technology experts at our parent company, Trinity Health, and at SJRMC institutions. By phasing the initiative, Trinity Health hospitals are learning from each other and together facing the challenges of unifying diverse institutions and patient populations across seven states.

This current funding request will help support critical components of this groundbreaking initiative. While SJRMC has already committed \$28.5 million to the core components described above, funds are not currently available for additional technologies needed to reap the full benefits of improved quality and new efficiencies for our patients and communities.

I should also point out that this effort to advance the electronic health record at SJRMC will be enhanced by our participation in a unique community-wide initiative. As you may know, SJRMC is co-owner and developer of the Michiana Health Information Network (MHIN). This is one of only a few operational Health Information Exchanges in the country. MHIN electronically connects physician practices, hospitals, and other providers seamlessly across the community for real-time exchange of patient information. To date, 350 physicians and over 1100 total users are connected via this Health Information Exchange. Because of this community-wide endeavor, this request for support of the electronic health record inside our hospitals will help advance knowledge about the potential for health information technology to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of healthcare delivery nationally.

A detailed project description is attached but we would be happy to supply you with any further information about SJRMC and the technologies proposed. We would also welcome an opportunity to host you or your staff at the hospital when you are next in the South Bend area.

In the meantime, thank you for the opportunity to submit this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Nellyer', written over a horizontal line.

Nancy R. Nellyer, FACHE
President & Chief Executive Officer