

Nebraska Association of Homes and Services for the Aging

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To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is being prepared and sent in support of an \$11.0 million capital campaign conducted by the Douglas County Health Center Foundation to raise funds for a potential remodeling project at Douglas County Health Center (DCHC), in Omaha, Nebraska.

Douglas County Health Center has a rich, proud heritage beginning in 1887 when it provided health care services to persons with mental illnesses and contagious diseases. It provided acute care and was the only hospital based emergency room in Douglas County in the 1940s and 1950s. It also served as a teaching hospital where resident physicians did rotations in their various specialties.

In the 1970s, Douglas County closed the acute care medical services provided at Douglas County Hospital (as it was known then) when that need was being met by other acute care providers in Omaha. Today, former acute care areas in the 1967 portion of the building are not being used for long term care residents. The residents reside in rooms that contain four beds with bathrooms that are not handicap accessible by residents in wheelchairs or those who walk with walkers as the bathroom doors are only 24 inches wide. The majority of these residents are indigent persons with behavioral needs and infectious diseases.

Approximately 95% of the residents living at DCHC are on Medicaid and they are residents other. DCHC tends to get referrals for residents who other facilities have turned away or who have special needs related to psychiatric diagnosis/behavioral problems. DCHC's Mission, since its inception in 1887, has been to care for the indigent and those whose needs are not met elsewhere in our community.

Douglas County Health Center today is rated a Five Star Facility by the Centers for Medicare/Medicaid Services (CMS) and has held that prestigious distinction since the start of the Five Star Rating System more than one year ago. The staff at DCHC provide quality care to the residents who call DCHC "home", as evidenced by this Five Star Rating.

Douglas County Commissioners have spent approximately \$20.0 million in renovations to DCHC since 1993. Through this large investment by Douglas County, the Health Center provides for the "basic" needs of the residents it cared for at DCHC. In 2001, (the year that fundraising for the Solarium addition began), the DCHC Foundation created a "Community/County Partnership" asking major Omaha foundations to **come alongside** and join Douglas County to help support a capital campaign to raise \$1.2 million for the Solarium/Fitness Center additions to DCHC to enhance the quality of life for present and future long term care and assisted living residents who call DCHC "home". In 2008, these Solarium additions and the Fitness Center were opened for residents to enjoy and were ultimately given to Douglas County by the Douglas County Health Center Foundation to operate and maintain.

The Douglas County Health Center Foundation is considering embarking on a new capital campaign to raise \$11million to completely renovate four floors of the old acute care wing of DCHC. The four-bed wards would be eliminated and new semi-private and a few private rooms would be created complete with handicap restrooms in each resident room. These restrooms would include a sit down shower that is wheelchair accessible.

The mechanical systems and windows would be updated to modern, energy efficient systems that would save energy costs and ultimately reduce operating expenses for the future as Medicaid and Medicare reimbursement becomes more and more tight each year.

As the population of the United States ages, there will be a large demand from aging "Baby Boomers" who will be seeking and demanding quality aging services and care that DCHC provides in a modern up-to-date facility.

Would you want your loved ones living in a room with three other residents and not have access to a handicapped restroom in the room they live in? I would not and I am sure you would not either.

For this reason, I am writing this letter and supporting the Douglas County Health Center Foundation's capital campaign to ask the Omaha community to **come alongside** and join Douglas County to help enhance the quality of life for present and future residents of Douglas County Health Center.

Sincerely yours,



Ronald L. Jensen
Executive Director