

July 19, 2010

The Honorable Carol Boigon
Councilwoman At-Large
1437 Bannock Street, Room 451
Denver, CO 80202

RE: Smoking Ban Around City Hospitals

Dear Councilwoman Boigon,

Thank you for your recent letter and request for feedback from Exempla Saint Joseph Hospital regarding the impact of the Smoking Ban around city hospitals that was passed in August of 2008.

In your letter, you asked for our feedback via a series of questions in order to help you in your efforts to extend the smoking ban. A number of staff members who have been involved in the implementation and ongoing enforcement of our Smoke Free campus policy have assisted me in providing you with answers to your questions. Below is our response to each one.

1. Was the ban effective in eliminating smoking on the public right-of-way adjoining your hospital and all its relevant buildings, especially near patient entrances and exits? *Yes, it has been effective in helping us to dramatically decrease the number of people who smoke in these areas, however it has not entirely eliminated it since the hospital doesn't have a way to enforce a Denver City Ordinance.*
2. Have you had any concerns – negative or positive – about impacts of the ban? Please explain. *The biggest concern is simply the lack of awareness by the public that the Ordinance is in existence even to the extent that we have encountered police officers who are unaware of it.*
3. Has your facility received any comments from patients and/or visitors on the smoking ban? Please be specific. How have you have responded? *We have had numerous positive compliments from patients and visitors who have noticed that they do not have to walk through a cloud of smoke when approaching the hospital. In addition, we feel it has improved patient safety because patients no longer request to leave the hospital to smoke since they are unable to do so anywhere outdoors.*
4. Has your facility received any comments from neighbors about patients, visitors or staff leaving hospital property to smoke and to intrude on the neighborhood with noise, garbage, loitering, and so on? Please be specific. *Yes, in the early days of implementation, we had a limited number of comments, with the biggest problem being littering. Even so, our neighbors*

have been very supportive of the hospital's smoke free campus policy and the City Ordinance and its intent.

5. How did you implement your good neighbor policy? What worked and what would you change? Please send me a copy of the policy. *We collaborated with the other area medical care providers and developed a communication (flyer) that we sent to the residents in our neighborhoods. We offered a hotline for complaints and responded in every case. We received a total of five calls.*
6. Based on your experiences over the past 18 months, do you have suggestions to improve the ban on smoking around City hospitals? *Our suggestion would be to increase public awareness of this City Ordinance. One tactic would be for the city to post signage around the campus of the hospital that includes the fact that there is a \$300 fine per violation. In addition, we would suggest consideration be given to some targeted enforcement by the Denver Police Department.*
7. Has the ban helped you to better serve your patients? Has it affected your professional ratings on hospital quality? *Yes, and we believe it has contributed to an increase in our patient satisfaction scores. We believe it is better for overall patient care as stated earlier and that our nurses and other care providers no longer smell of smoke when working in close proximity with our patients.*
8. Is there anything else you think I should know about the smoking ban around City hospitals? *If the ban were to sunset or be repealed it would be a giant step backward. Therefore, we would recommend and support enacting this Ordinance permanently and even expanding the scope to include the right-of-way areas around other medically-related facilities such as medical clinics and other outpatient facilities.*

Again, thank you for your letter and invitation to respond and support your work on this most worthwhile endeavor. Having this Ordinance in place has been a tremendous benefit and has supported our efforts to promote a healthy environment for our patients and staff.

If I can answer any other questions or be of additional assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards,



Bain J. Farris
President and Chief Executive Officer



Working With You to be a Good Neighbor

One of the ways to ensure the well-being of our community is by confronting the nation's leading cause of preventable death – smoking. Smoking is a major risk factor for cancer, heart, and lung disease, causing more than 450,000 premature deaths in the United States every year.

As health care providers, we're committed to building a healthier community. That's why we believe it's extremely important to set the example in this area of Denver to help curb the use of tobacco. We are not alone in our effort to eliminate tobacco products but rather join numerous other hospitals and health care providers throughout the city and the state in setting this new standard.

Unfortunately, as both employees and visitors observe our Tobacco Free policies, they may walk into your neighborhood to use tobacco products. Visitors are experiencing a stressful time.

However, it is our full expectation that our employees act respectfully when off our campus by not loitering or littering on our neighbors property. If you observe employees of our respective organizations loitering, littering or otherwise degrading your property, please accept our apology and know we are working hard to enforce our respective policies that include provisions for poor conduct while off-campus.

