

Civil Rights Complaint Against Advocate Hospitals

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By Steve Grzanich
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CHICAGO—Two community organizations are filing a federal civil rights lawsuit against Advocate Health Systems of Chicago.

A civil rights complaint was expected to be filed today (Friday) by several community groups accuses Advocate Health Systems of Chicago of racial discrimination.

In the complaint, groups including the South Austin Coalition allege Advocate cares more about white patients that it does about minority patients. The court action comes just two days after the groups released a study that they claim shows disproportionate spending by Advocate at city hospitals versus suburban hospitals.

“When you break it down per bed, they spend \$14,000 per bed in white hospitals and \$3,000 per bed on hospitals that serve minorities,” said Joseph Geevarghese, Service Employees International Union. Geevarghese headed up the “The Hospital Accountability Project,” which authored the study for the community groups.

“Federal law says that any institution that receives federal funds, in this case Medicare and Medicaid dollars, are prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race. Advocate’s pattern and practice of discriminatory spending we believe violates the law,” said Geevarghese.

Nurse Susan Hall, who works at South Suburban Hospital says the funding issue translates into daily shortages of basic care items for patients.

“No hot water, no linen, no towels, no blankets, not enough soap, not enough of anything. My patient asked for a blanket and when I couldn’t find one I offered him my jacket,” she said.

Advocate officials, quoted by the Daily Southtown, said this was the latest effort to malign Advocate by staff involved on ongoing unionization efforts and called the allegations false and groundless.

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