

HUNDREDS GATHER TO DEMAND THAT ADVOCATE HEALTH MAKE INVESTMENTS IN CHICAGO HOSPITALS

Peaceful demonstration draws sixteen police officers

CHICAGO, IL (Aug. 9, 2005) -- Hundreds of community and labor activists gathered yesterday afternoon at LaGrange Country Club to demand that Advocate Health Care CEO Jim Skogsbergh end the company's pattern of unfair investments. The peaceful protestors were subsequently detained for over 90 minutes by Cook County Sheriff's Police and Cook County Forest Preserve Police, who drew weapons. The protestors were allowed to leave after over 90 minutes of being detained in school buses with no air conditioning in 90 degree plus heat.

"This is shameful treatment of a group of people who were peacefully demonstrating to end health care injustice," said Joseph Geevarghese, Director of the SEIU Hospital Accountability Project.

The people detained were part of community coalition that sought to speak with Advocate CEO Jim Skogsbergh at Advocate's Oak Brook headquarters. The coalition gathered peacefully in Advocate's parking lot, and dispersed peacefully when Skogsbergh did not appear.

The group then traveled to the LaGrange Country Club, where Advocate had scheduled a fundraiser in the hopes of finding Skogsbergh and asking him for a meeting. The group entered the clubhouse, heard a few speeches, and returned to the buses that transported them. LaGrange police officers were at the scene when the group departed.

After the group had peacefully left the country club, approximately 16 squad cars from the Cook County Sheriff's Police pulled over the convoy of four yellow school buses and six cars. Cook County Forest Preserve Police Officers Reyna and Boubourekas approached the group with gun drawn, and Cook County Sheriff's police officers then escorted the demonstrators back to the country club. Police officers allowed the group to leave after they determined that the allegations of unruly behavior and rioting were false.

Community groups, patients, and workers have been asking Advocate Health Care to agree to a Protocol for Agreement that would address community concerns about Advocate's business practices. In particular, community groups were responding to reports that Advocate spends a disproportionate share of its capital budget at suburban hospitals serving a predominantly white population, while failing to make improvements at city hospitals serving minority communities.

"This year alone, Advocate has proposed spending over \$500 million on improving its suburban hospitals serving mostly white patients, while once again ignoring its hospitals in Chicago," said Rev. Cheryl Rivera, an organizer with the Metropolitan Alliance of Congregations (MAC). MAC is one of over 25 grassroots organizations representing 500,000 members calling on Advocate Health Care Systems to invest equally in all its hospitals; increase its commitment to charity care; secure workers' rights; and secure fair treatment of uninsured patients.