

March 4, 2008

The Honorable Todd H. Stroger  
President, Cook County Board of Commissioners  
118 North Clark Street Ave.  
Chicago, Illinois 60602

Dear President Stroger:

Fourteen months ago, you asked me to take on the role of Interim Chief for the Bureau, and I accepted. In taking the position, my immediate task was to carry out the Board's mandate to reduce the Bureau's budget by **\$100 million dollars while preserving essential services and not closing a hospital** in the face of a County-wide fiscal crisis. The task was most difficult and, necessarily, had far-reaching, often negative repercussions.

Throughout my tenure as Interim Chief, my goal was to preserve the Bureau's mission of providing quality health care to the medically indigent by maintaining essential services in the face of drastic budget cuts. After responding to the immediate crisis, I, along with my colleagues throughout the Bureau, began planning to rebuild the Bureau to its previous status as one of the premier public hospitals in the country, and complete the restructuring all **requiring the additional revenue** that the Board passed on February 29<sup>th</sup>. Toward that end, I have consistently supported the concept of an independent governing structure for the Bureau, a concept which became a reality as part of the County's 2008 Annual Appropriation.

I am encouraged by this important development, but I must strongly caution you and the Board that it is imperative that the composition of this new governing body truly reflect a non-political, professional base. History, as well as recent experiences at other public health systems, has taught us that independent governance is not a panacea. It will require constant vigilance by you and the Board to ensure that the needs of our patient population remain paramount, as opposed to the needs of certain special interest groups with self-

serving political agendas. I leave that critical oversight in your and the Board's hands.

Mr. President, I sincerely thank you for your extraordinary support during my tenure as Interim Chief. I am also grateful to those Board members who supported the Bureau during this arduous time. I wish you and the Board well as you shepherd the Bureau through this important transition and rebuilding the Bureau of Health.

I have been in many challenging situations including many war zones, yet this has been one of the most difficult years in my over 30 years in medicine. Mr. President, the **two goals** I set out in taking this position on an interim basis 14 months ago have been accomplished – **preserving essential services while following the mandate of cutting almost 100 million dollars** from the budget and **obtaining the funding necessary to rebuild** the Bureau of Health as we move into 2008. Attached is the Progress Report outlining what we have accomplished in the Bureau of Health over the last 14 months.

**I respectfully tender my resignation as Interim Chief of the Cook County Bureau of Health Services effective March 30, 2008.**

Finally, after practicing for twenty years as a physician with the County, please allow me to convey what a genuine honor and privilege it has been to work alongside the talented men and women at the Bureau of Health. I will take my fond memories of their tireless dedication and compassion with me wherever I go. It has been my pleasure to serve the working poor who cannot afford health insurance. I wish the Bureau of Health much future success.

Very truly yours,

Robert M. Simon, M.D.  
Interim Chief

Attachment (Progress Report)

cc: Members of the Board of Commissioners