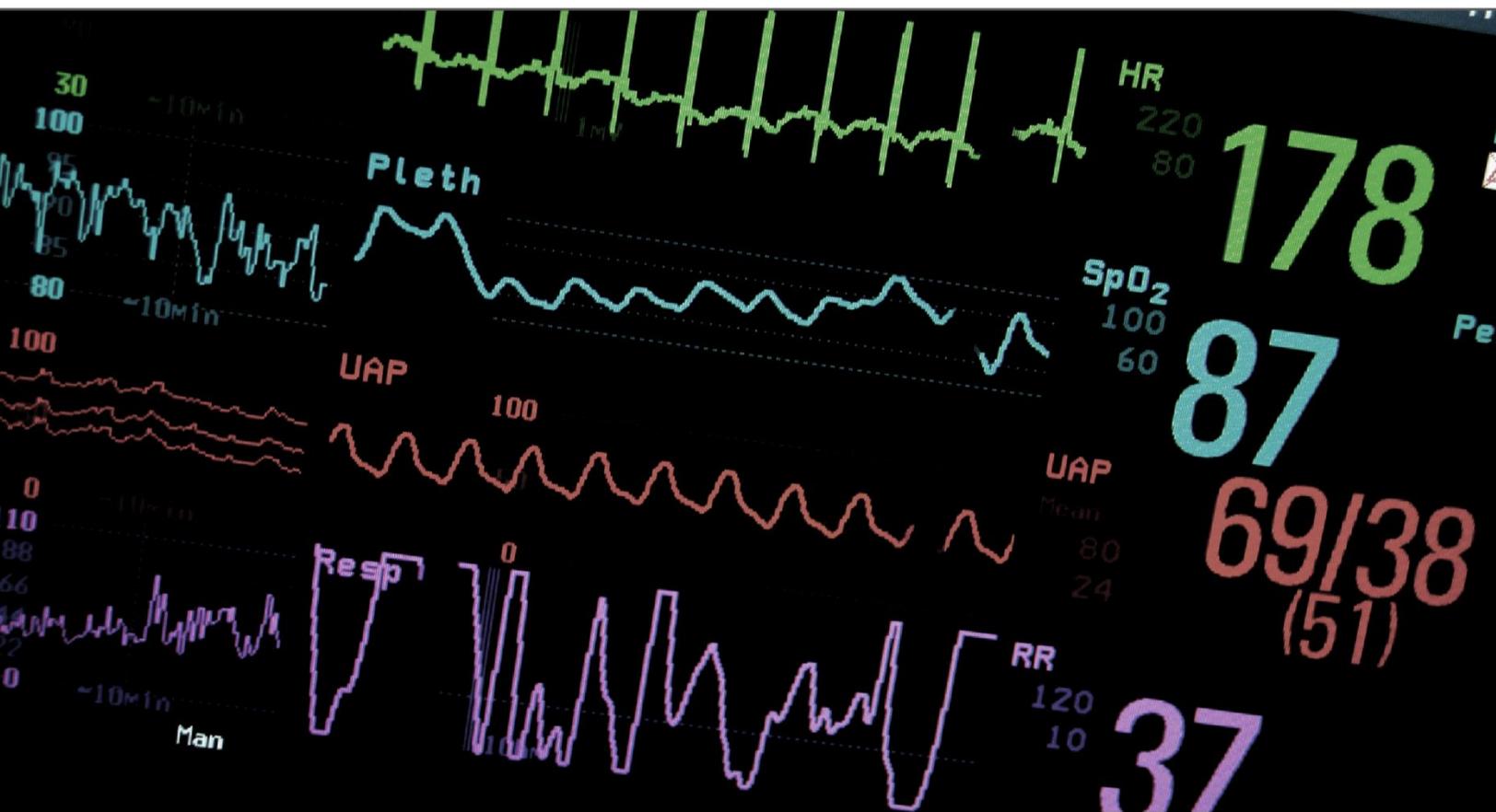


DISTANCE MATTERS

WHAT LOSING TWO HOSPITALS
WOULD MEAN FOR BROOKLYN



Office of

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PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

INTRODUCTION

New York City has seen an increase in hospital closures including the shuttering of Saint Vincent's, Peninsula Hospital Center, Parkway Hospital, and many others. The loss of these hospitals shocked the communities who utilized their services for years, and the repercussions of their closures are still being felt.

The experience of Saint Vincent's Hospital is instructive for those who are charged with the fate of the Long Island College Hospital. Saint Vincent's Hospital closed in April 2010 in the face of widespread community opposition. A little over one year later, the Manhattan District Attorney opened an investigation into whether hospital leadership purposely bankrupted the hospital in order to sell it to be turned into luxury housing.¹ In June 2011, the CUNY School of Public Health published a community health assessment to determine the impact of St. Vincent's closure on surrounding residents.² Community experiences were "consistently negative."³ Residents saw decreased access to care, lost medical records, and lost their long time physicians and psychiatrists due to changes in accepted insurance or because they simply disappeared. Community organizations lost the ability to bring their clients to the hospital in an emergency. Nearby health facilities were overcrowded and unable to accommodate the influx of former St. Vincent's patients.



Over the last several months, communities in Brooklyn have been fighting the proposed closure of Long Island College Hospital (LICH). Just two years after the State University of New York (SUNY) purchased LICH, they have decided to close the hospital. This disastrous decision will immediately impact over 82,000 Brooklyn residents who live within one mile of the hospital, 12,000 of whom are over the age of 60.⁴ State authorities are also seeking to close Interfaith Medical Center after the Department of Health rejected its restructuring plan. The closing of Interfaith will affect 175,788 residents, 2,000 of whom are over the age of 60.⁵ This closing will impact more than twice as many residents as LICH's closing.

A report by the Commission on Health Care Facilities states that losing emergency department or a reducing hospital outpatient capacity reduces access to primary care, worsens the health status of the residents, increases ambulatory care-sensitive admission rates and puts a strain on remaining hospitals.⁶ Additionally, the closure of emergency departments increases the patient loads at surrounding hospitals, potentially increasing wait times and mortality rates.⁷

¹ http://www.nypost.com/p/news/local/manhattan/da_eyes_st_vinny_go_for_broke_plan_fvDtudcbAWyxqqiQnhbzal

² http://www.nyc.gov/html/mancb2/downloads/pdf/community_health/cha_qualreport_10June2011-final.pdf

³ http://www.nyc.gov/html/mancb2/downloads/pdf/community_health/cha_qualreport_10June2011-final.pdf

⁴ Based on 2010 U.S. Census Data with the population of each census tract weighted by the percentage of the tract that is within one mile of LICH.

⁵ Based on 2010 U.S. Census Data with the population of each census tract weighted by the percentage of the tract that is within one mile of Interfaith.

⁶ <http://www.nyhealthcarecommission.org/docs/final/appendix2-newyorkcityrac.pdf>

⁷ Hsia RY, Kellermann AL, Shen Y. Factors Associated With Closures of Emergency Departments in the United States. *JAMA*. 2011;305(19):1978-1985. doi:10.1001/jama.2011.620. Accessed at:

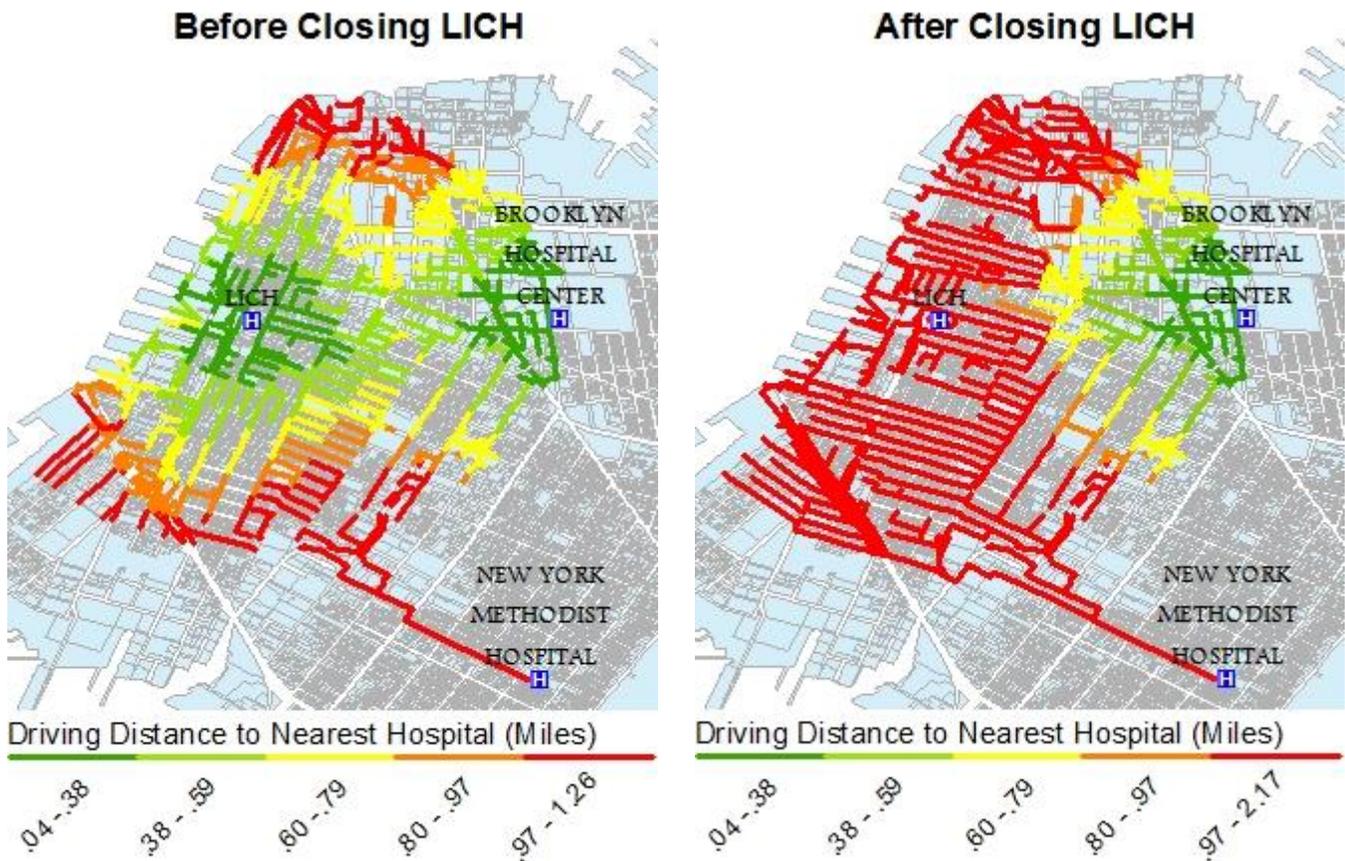
<http://jama.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=1161864>

This report illustrates how the closing of LICH and Interfaith would directly impact the ability of community members to reach the nearest hospital quickly and safely, and assesses the impact of the proposed closure on nearby hospitals.

INCREASED TRAVEL TIME TO NEAREST HOSPITAL

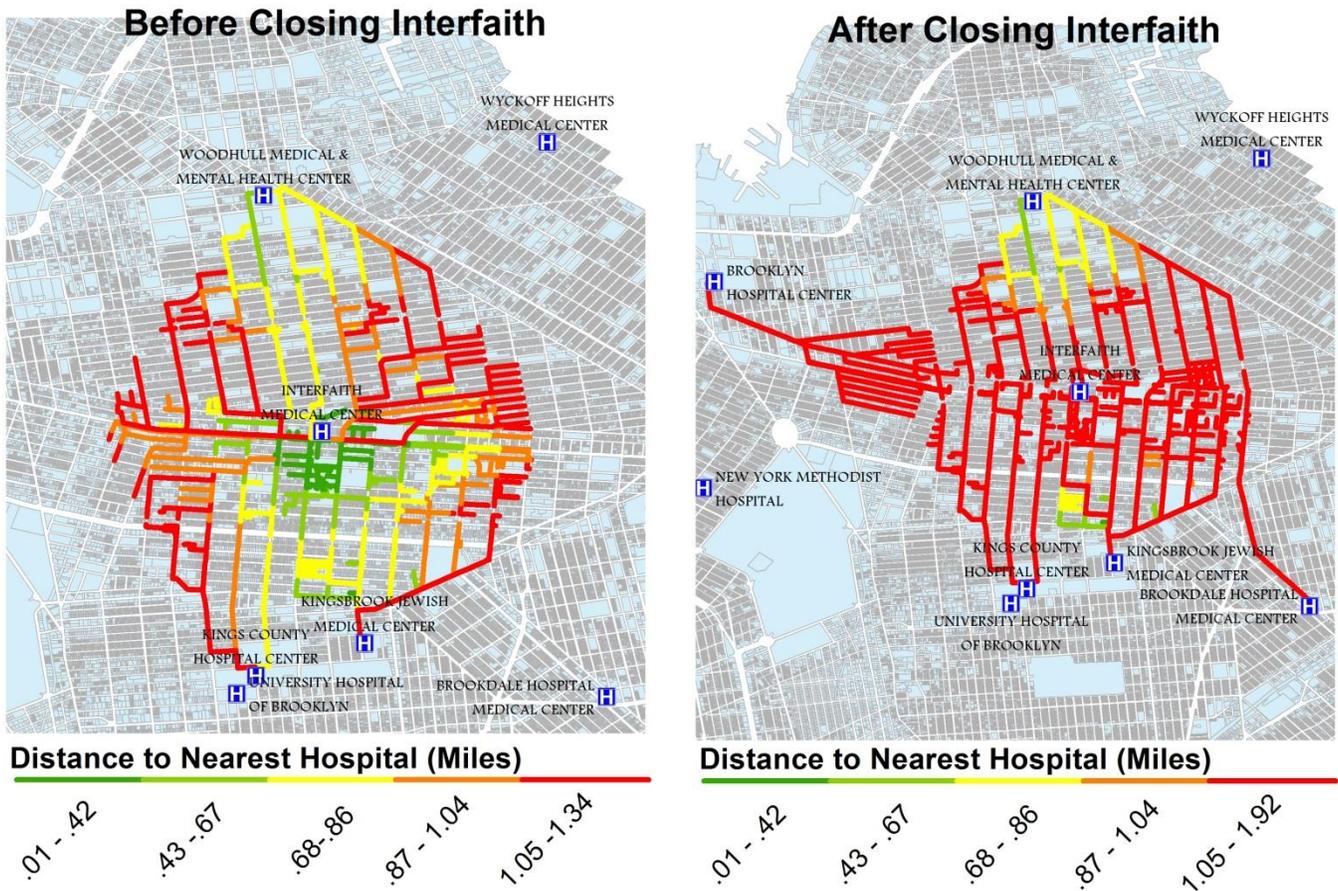
Currently, communities in close proximity to LICH and Interfaith travel a minimal distance to obtain hospital services. In contrast, as the maps below illustrate, the closure of LICH and Interfaith will significantly increase the distance and travel time necessary to find medical attention – potentially creating medical risks as patients must look beyond their community for hospital care.

For residents living in close proximity to LICH, the nearest hospitals are New York Methodist Hospital and the Brooklyn Hospital Center. These two hospitals are at a greater distance from the impacted community, and the closure of LICH has the potential to increase driving times. For residents who rely on Interfaith, the two closest hospitals are Kings County Hospital Center and Kingsbrook Jewish Medical Center, both over a mile away from Interfaith’s current location. Any potential increase in response time is deeply concerning: one study of heart attack patients found that there is an increase in mortality rates when a drive to the hospital is increased by less than 10 minutes.⁸



⁸ Yu-Chu Shen Ph.D and Renee Y Hsia, M.D. M.Sc, “Does Decreased Access to Emergency Departments Affect Patient Outcomes? Analysis of Acute Myocardial Infarction Population 1996-2005,” *Health Services Research*. Volume 47, Issue 1pt1, pages 188-210. February 2012.

In fact, the risks associated with LICH's closure are already evident. Following the recent emergency room closure at the facility, one NY1 News report discovered that an EMT driver had to drive a heart attack victim 15 minutes away to the Brooklyn Hospital Center, instead of the more nearby facility at LICH.⁹ A Cobble Hill resident also suffering a heart attack was forced to go to New York Methodist which took nine minutes to get there, three times longer than the trip to LICH would have taken.¹⁰ These differences in response time may seem small – but in real life, they can mean the difference between life and death.



HEALTH DISPARITIES OF THE SURROUNDING AREA

Long Island College Hospital

Long Island College Hospital is one the closest hospital to the neighborhood of Red Hook. Red Hook is a low income neighborhood with 38.6% of households living below the poverty line and 52.2% living below 1.5 times the poverty line.¹¹ Red Hook is also home to the Red Hook Houses, a NYCHA public housing development where 61% of residents live below 1.5 times the poverty line. In 2009 Hunter College partnered with Red Hook Health Initiative to undertake a community health assessment. They found a prevalence of diabetes and asthma higher than in both surrounding neighborhoods and national averages in comparable neighborhoods.¹² This is a vulnerable population

⁹ <http://www.brooklyneagle.com/articles/lich-patients-diverted-other-hospitals-protests-grow-2013-06-21-215600>

¹⁰ <http://www.brooklyneagle.com/articles/residents-fear-worst-brooklyn-er-crisis-drags-2013-07-04-160300>

¹¹ American Community Survey 2011 5-Year Estimates

¹² http://www.brooklyn6.org/_attachments/2009-05-22%20RHI%20Red%20Hook%20Houses%20Health%20Assessment.pdf

with high rates of chronic diseases that depend on accessible reliable health care. The Red Hook community should not have to repeat the confusion and interrupted care that was seen when St. Vincent's closed.

Interfaith Medical Center

Interfaith currently serves one of the highest-need communities in New York City. Health disparities for Central Brooklyn are particularly acute – the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has identified this region as having some of the highest death rates in New York City.¹³ Bedford-Stuyvesant and Crown Heights have long been recognized as a “Health Professional Shortage Area” and “Medically Underserved,”¹⁴ and Medicaid accounts for nearly 50% of health insurance coverage in the area.¹⁵ These neighborhoods have an estimated underserved population of approximately 160,000,¹⁶ one of the lowest rates of physicians, and one of the highest rates of adult inpatient hospitalizations that could be prevented with primary care.¹⁷ Indicators of poor health are particularly high for Bedford-Stuyvesant and Crown Heights: obesity, diabetes, HIV diagnoses, and mental health-related hospitalizations are all higher than the Brooklyn average.¹⁸ Clearly, the need for high-quality, community-based medical care is acute – yet the proposed closure of Interfaith threatens to cut medical resources where they are needed most. In the surrounding area around Interfaith, 25% of the households are below poverty and 36% of household are living 1.5 times below the poverty line.

IMPACT ON SURROUNDING HOSPITALS

The strain on hospital capacity at nearby facilities has been evident since LICH closed its Emergency Room on June 20th. A July 24th article by the New York Daily News reported that it took one patient over 36 hours to get a hospital bed at the Brooklyn Hospital Center, while patients were told that it could take up to 10 hours to see a doctor at New York Methodist Hospital. This type of overcrowding can have tragic consequences: one New York City study found that overcrowding in ER's can lead to more deaths in heart attacks patients due to diverted ambulances and longer travel times¹⁹ Hospital closings impact regional health care capacity by forcing the surrounding facilities to absorb additional patients. The hospitals surrounding LICH and Interfaith are the three busiest in Brooklyn. Kings County Hospital Center treats the most patients in all of Brooklyn, Woodhull Medical Center treats the 2nd highest number of patients, Brooklyn Hospital Center treats the 3rd highest.²⁰ Other hospitals surrounding LICH are New York Methodist which treats the 5th highest in all of Brooklyn. These and other neighboring hospitals will begin to admit LICH's and Interfaith's patients, despite the fact that many of the facilities are close to being above the 85% optimal occupancy rate. New York State Regulations identify an ideal hospital occupancy rate of 85% because higher rates do not allow for surges in demand.²¹ In addition, occupancy rates over 82% increase the risk of spreading disease within the hospital.²²

¹³ <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/episrv/disparitiesone.pdf>

¹⁴ Fifty primary care physicians per 100,000 residents is considered the minimum for adequate health services. Shortage designations determined by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration. See: <http://www.hrsa.gov/shortage/find.html>

¹⁵ By Community District. http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/pub/departments/csb/documents/csb/CD_3_Data_Tables_3-12-12.pdf

¹⁶ See: <http://www.thenewyorkworld.com/2013/04/01/doctor-cuts/>. For a data analysis tool, see:

¹⁷ <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/epi/epiresearch-healthcare-access.pdf>

¹⁸ Defined parameters for these figures are consistent with the United Hospital Fund Neighborhood determination for Central Brooklyn. See: http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/pub/departments/csb/documents/csb/CD_3_Data_Tables_3-12-12.pdf

¹⁹ <http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/23035598?uid=3739832&uid=2&uid=4&uid=3739256&sid=21102173975853>)

²⁰ Total number of Inpatients, Outpatients and Emergency Department visit retrieved from the Department of Health Hospital Audit reports. <http://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/sparcs/reports/audit.htm>

²¹ http://www.health.ny.gov/health_care/medicaid/redesign/docs/brooklyn_mrt_final_report.pdf

²² : Jones R (2011) Hospital bed occupancy demystified. *British Journal of Healthcare Management* 17(6): 242-248.



The Closure of Long Island College Hospital: Impact on Surrounding Hospitals

The two closest hospitals that will receive the largest wave of LICH's patients are the Brooklyn Hospital Center and New York Methodist Hospital. New York Methodist has already experienced a strain in capacity after the closing of Victory Memorial Hospital in 2008. This caused New York Methodist Hospital to initially operate at 100% capacity²³ and as of 2010 it was operating at 90%.²⁴ Brooklyn Hospital Center and New York Methodist Hospital will not be able to absorb all of LICH's patients and remain under the 85% occupancy. New York Methodist Hospital is already overcapacity and Brooklyn Hospital Center can only accommodate less than 58% of LICH's 2010 patient load. Over 7,000 LICH patients will find themselves repeating the experiences of the patients at St. Vincent's, some of whom could not get a doctor's appointment for 6 months after their hospital closed.²⁵

The Closure of Interfaith Medical Center: Impact on Surrounding Hospitals

Interfaith Medical Center's proposed closure will also heavily impact surrounding hospitals. Interfaith is currently operating at 65%²⁶ occupancy and there are six hospitals that will absorb Interfaith's patients. Many patients may choose to go Kings County Hospital Center or Kingsbrook Jewish Medical Center because of their proximity to

²³ Report on Implementation of the Report of the commission on Health Care Facilities in the Twenty-First Century. New York State Department of Health,

²⁴ Occupancy rates of hospitals and local capacity calculated using NYS DoH SPARCS 2010 Annual Report Hospital Inpatient Discharge Data. http://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/sparcs/annual/ip/2010/t2010_08.htm

²⁵ Romero D, Kwan A, Swearingen J, Nestler S, Cohen N. (2011) CUNY School of Public Health at Hunter College. *St Vincent's Catholic Medical Center: Community Health Assessment. Qualitative Data Collection Report.* http://www.nyc.gov/html/mancb2/downloads/pdf/community_health/cha_qualreport_10June2011-final.pdf

²⁶ Occupancy rates of hospitals and local capacity calculated using NYS DoH SPARCS 2010 Annual Report Hospital Inpatient Discharge Data. http://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/sparcs/annual/ip/2010/t2010_08.htm

Interfaith. These two hospitals would only be able to absorb between 28%²⁷ and 36% of Interfaith's patients. Some patients may choose to go to Brooklyn Hospital Center, which will be doubly impacted if both LICH and Interfaith close.

CLOSING OUR HOSPITALS IS NOT AN OPTION

Brooklyn cannot afford to lose the Long Island College Hospital and Interfaith. Their closure would create avoidable risks for nearby communities, increase precious response time, and burden already-taxed nearby facilities. Public Advocate Bill de Blasio calls for an immediate halt to all closure plans and calls on Governor Cuomo to intervene and save these critical hospital facilities.

²⁷ Absorption amount is total number of patients that would put a hospital above the 85% occupancy / Number of Interfaith Discharges