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**Before the U.S. House Homeland Security Committee
Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications**

*July 6, 2013, Field Hearing
Assessing Central Indiana's Preparedness for a Mass Casualty Event*

Good morning Chairman Brooks, Senator Donnelly, Congresswoman Walorski, Congressman Young and all others with us today. I'm here representing the staff of Franciscan St. Francis Health to talk to you about our mission, specifically preparing the Central Indiana community to prepare for emergencies and disasters. .

Franciscan St. Francis Health is one of the largest healthcare providers in Indiana with campuses in Carmel, Indianapolis, and Mooresville. We are a division of the Franciscan Alliance, one of the region's largest Catholic health care providers. Our Indianapolis hospital offers cutting-edge technology and facilities, including the south side's only comprehensive cardiac and vascular care program. We have been ranked by multiple outlets as a Top 100 Hospital and have received recognition for clinical excellence and outstanding patient experience.

Since our founding, our values have been rooted in the Franciscan tradition. In the spirit of Francis of Assisi, the health care professionals at Franciscan St. Francis exhibit compassionate concern for the patients we serve and strive for Christian stewardship—a just and fair allocation of human, financial and spiritual resources.

Since 1996, I have been fortunate to serve as the Director of the Franciscan St. Francis Neighborhood Health Center at Garfield Park, where we provide primary medical care as well as health education for Hoosier families who lack access to affordable health care. Serving Indiana's underprivileged communities for the past 17 years has been a challenging but extremely rewarding experience.

It is our job to help meet the basic medical needs of vulnerable populations here in Indiana. Effective healthcare emergency preparedness requires carefully considering the needs of vulnerable populations. Social factors often cause populations to be at greater risk during disaster and crisis events. Not unlike the social determinants of health, socioeconomic status, along with age, gender, ethnicity, class, disability, and immigration status, all these factors determine lack of equity in access to opportunities and increased exposure to hazards. During Hurricane Katrina in 2005, for example, and most recently following Hurricane Sandy, this social vulnerability to disasters was widely evident as children, women, minorities, and the poor were disproportionately affected. Serving culturally diverse populations also presents challenges. Our health system has a large presence on the south side of Indianapolis, home to a large Burmese population. Emergency events call for the engagement of the entire community, and we strive to break through language and other culture barriers to meet our healthcare objectives.

Like most hospitals, we have not been strangers to emergencies. Last summer, dozens of Indiana children were sickened and injured when a dangerous chemical combination in a neighborhood pool created a toxic gas. Our acute care hospital in Indianapolis received 25 patients, all of whom required decontamination due to chemical exposure. Because of our hazardous materials and emergency preparedness training, as well as the partnerships with community responders, staff was able to successfully manage the surge in patients, while achieving positive health outcomes for those affected by the incident.

Additionally, Franciscan St. Francis Health - Indianapolis was called to assist the victims of last fall's Richmond Hills home explosion. Among the items lost in the event were the medications of numerous neighborhood residents. Our hospital offered its services to provide a mobile clinic, working with a local pharmacy to meet the need for maintenance medications for the residents of Richmond Hills. While the mobile clinic was never deployed, Franciscan St. Francis stood ready to assist the community in its time of need.

The mission of Franciscan St. Francis is Continuing Christ's ministry in our Franciscan tradition, and we strive to adhere to every word of the mission statement. In order for our work to be "continuing," our hospitals must be able to continue to operate through disasters and other emergency events. Franciscan St. Francis Health—through individual and collaborative efforts—continuously strives to develop comprehensive and innovative strategies for emergency preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation. We maintain a full-time disaster management coordinator for our three Central Indiana hospitals who serves as a liaison to community response partners, as well as enhance organizational preparedness through planning and training. Having this resource has allowed us to conduct full-scale emergency drills and streamline our emergency response plans into operational checklists. We conduct an annual Hazard Vulnerability Analysis, a method used to identify the most likely potential dangers to specific healthcare providers and to provide action plans for mitigating and responding to those vulnerabilities. We have upgraded our equipment, including a robust communications system that operates across our three campuses. All campuses are also in the process of becoming certified as "storm-ready" by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

While Franciscan St. Francis Health takes the initiative in creating comprehensive disaster management policies for our hospitals, we realize that true emergency preparedness cannot exist in a vacuum. We engage with other healthcare providers and public safety officials in order to create an efficient, collaborative emergency management system. Franciscan St. Francis Health - Indianapolis was an early, founding member of the MESH Coalition, and we have remained a strong partner since. MESH is a healthcare non-profit organization focused on giving hospitals the accurate information and resources to respond to emergency events and remain viable through recovery, promotes collaboration between Marion County hospitals in the area of emergency management and provides invaluable resources we could not afford individually. Our membership with MESH has proven to be very beneficial over the years, allowing St. Francis to participate in many community initiatives, including the Super Care Clinic during the 2011 Super Bowl in Indianapolis, as well as hosting nationally recognized emergency management professionals in the MESH Grand Rounds Series.

Another significant area in which MESH provides assistance is healthcare intelligence. During mass casualty incidents, MESH helps us better manage patient surge by notifying our emergency department how many patients are being transported to our hospital. MESH serves as the Medical Multi-Agency Coordinating Center (Med MACC) for Marion County, providing hospitals with real-time intelligence, including news and weather, public safety radio traffic, information from restricted homeland security portals, and social media. Franciscan St. Francis has also leveraged social media as a source of healthcare intelligence, and utilizes platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to distribute information to our community.

MESH also assists Franciscan St. Francis with emergency planning by serving as a liaison with non-traditional emergency responders as well as researching real-world emergencies in order to identify strategies and tactics that were successful. We also participate in MESH's Hospital Preparedness Officers Working Group, where emergency management professionals meet to collaborate on Best Practices for training, education, emergency planning and exercises. By collaborating with other hospitals we can prevent redundancies in emergency planning and create an efficient response framework among area hospitals.

Chairman Brooks, Senator Donnelly, Congresswoman Walorski, and Congressman Young, thank you again for the opportunity to speak before this subcommittee today. Emergency preparedness is vital to healthcare here in Central Indiana and across the country. We at Franciscan St. Francis Health appreciate your dedication to this important area. I am happy to respond to any questions this subcommittee might have.