



Office of the City Clerk

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Legislation Text

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SALUTE TO SISTER ELIZABETH VAN STRATEN

WHEREAS, After more than three decades of dedicated service, Sister Elizabeth Van Straten, an extraordinary leader and devoted member of the Religious Hospitallers of Saint Joseph is retiring; and

WHEREAS, For the last decade, Sister Elizabeth has served as the president and chief executive officer St. Bernard Hospital, a vital health care institution in the heart of Chicago's Englewood community; and

WHEREAS, After graduating from DePaul University, Sister Elizabeth began her service at St. Bernard in 1978 where she served in different departments and in various capacities. By 1986, she was appointed as executive vice president and, subsequently, as president and chief executive officer in 1992; and

WHEREAS, After three of the four hospitals that served Englewood closed, St. Bernard was also slated for demise when Sister Elizabeth took over as its chief administrator. Through tenacity and determination, she was committed to staying in Englewood and serving its residents as the last serving nun of more than 100 over the past century who comprised the religious order that had founded St. Bernard Hospital in 1904 dedicated to serving the poor of that community; and

WHEREAS, Thanks in large part to Sister Elizabeth, St. Bernard survived and even thrived, becoming the largest employer in Englewood and an anchor for the community. Among her most significant accomplishment is the high quality of care at St. Bernard that has seen the hospital ranked nationally among the top 5% in the delivery of emergency services. She has expanded access to essential services through free mammograms for uninsured women, instituting dental services for children including those with special needs, and free prenatal programs as well as providing millions of dollars in charity care annually for those who are unable to pay; and

WHEREAS, In 1993, Sister Elizabeth instituted the provision of mental health services that include immediate screenings, 24-hour medical monitoring and treatment for patients who suffer from chemical dependency, depression and other mental health challenges. In 1995, she added a professional building to the campus to house primary care and specialist providers, serving more than 90,000 patients a year. In 2000, in partnership with the City of Chicago, she spearheaded the development of the award-winning Bernard Place, a 70-unit affordable housing development on vacant parcels of land near the hospital; and

WHEREAS, In 2003, to increase access to healthcare beyond Englewood, Sister Elizabeth launched the Pediatric Mobile Health Unit that offers free physicals and vaccinations to school-age children throughout this city's South Side. The Dental Center that she

opened in 2007, serves more than 5,000 patients a year. The St. Bernard Hospital

Clinic at Walmart, opened in the Auburn Gresham/Chatham area, offers extended weekday and weekend hours so that working families have access to quality health services; and

WHEREAS, Recognizing the vital importance of preventative healthcare, Sister Elizabeth partnered with four other community hospitals to found Family Health Network (FHN) in 1995. FHN works to increase access to healthcare and to ensure children and their mothers receive regular checkups, vaccinations, prenatal care and gynecological exams throughout Cook County; and

WHEREAS, Recognizing the need to stay abreast of the latest technological advancements in health care, Sister Elizabeth introduced electronic medical record keeping, an electronic documentation system to track patients' test results, diagnoses and prescriptions barcode-enabled bedside medication verification, state-of-the-art digital X-rays and mammography, and a 128-slice CT system among other cutting edge technologies - well in advance of many other hospitals; and

WHEREAS, The Honorable Willie B. Cochran, Alderman of the 20th Ward, has apprised this august body of this noteworthy nun's significant milestone; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED That we, the Mayor and members of the City of Chicago City Council, gathered together this 15th Day of November, 2012 AD, do hereby join with the grateful citizens of the Englewood and all of Chicago in saluting Sister Elizabeth Van Straten for her most remarkable 34 years of loyal and devoted service and express our sincerest wishes for health, happiness and success in all her future endeavors.

WILLIE B.COCHRAN Alderman-20th Ward

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED That a suitable copy of this resolution be prepared and presented to Sister Elizabeth Van Straten.