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**Healthcare Students and Community Members Rally against Discriminatory
Clinic Closure**

Group Demands the University of Illinois at Chicago uphold its Urban Mission

Chicago, IL -- The University of Illinois at Chicago Healthcare Students Against Discrimination will rally to demand that the University uphold its mission statement and *Great Cities Commitment** in front of the University of Illinois Hospital (1801 W. Taylor St), their training hospital, at **noon on Thursday, April 23, 2009**. The group will be joined by physicians, nurses, and medical support staff, in addition to various campus organizations and members of the Pilsen and greater Chicago community, as it hands the University more than one thousand signatures from UIC students and community members who have signed on against the clinic closure.

The healthcare students are protesting University action that has threatened to shut down a UIC community clinic, The Center for Women and Families at Pilsen, in mid-June of this year. The University claims that an amount of \$200,000, out of the University's \$4.2-billion dollar annual budget, justifies the closure of a clinic that serves 6,500 patients annually. The UIC Center for Women and Families at Pilsen focuses on nurse-midwifery, family medicine, pre- and post-natal services and women's health, including domestic violence, for a largely Spanish-speaking, low-income population of women and children.

The coalition bases their movement on the premise that healthcare is influenced not only by medical science, but also by public health, including community. The University would protect itself from a perceived racist, sexist and anti-immigrant sentiment, coupled to the gentrification of the Pilsen community, if it reversed its plan to shut down the community clinic. "When closing neighborhood services, you epitomize an under-handed displacement," said Rodrigo Paredes, a Pilsen community organizer. "You are displacing people to another neighborhood and stopping access." Paredes indicated that the clinic closure parallels the sentiment that occurs when removing other services, such as education and housing, from within reach of communities. "Did UIC forget we're patients, not customers? It's a clinic, not just a business," said Elia Arenas, a clinic patient and Pilsen resident.

Additionally, the threatened closure hampers UIC health professional training for those who chose to complete their training at UIC specifically because of the institution's national reputation of working with vulnerable populations, a professed priority of the institution. "Med students at UIC actually want to work in communities like Pilsen," said Lindsay Martin, a first-year medical student who explains, "The reason many of us came to medical school was because we want to make healthcare more equitable."

The UIC Healthcare Students Against Discrimination is a coalition of UIC-based healthcare students from the UIC Colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Public Health, Pharmacy, and Allied Health. The coalition challenges UIC to uphold its mission statement, which directly states that UIC "focuses on healthcare for under-served areas along with the advancement of biomedical knowledge and practice." The UIC Healthcare Students Against Discrimination also seeks to raise awareness about how patients' health and healthcare is influenced by their community.

Following the noon rally on Thursday April 23rd, there will be an evening solidarity vigil in front of the UIC Center for Women and Families at Pilsen (1858 West 18th Street) at 7pm. The vigil is open to all and will include a celebration of culture, music, and health.

* The UIC Great Cities Commitment aims to transform the traditional university concept of public service into a vital engagement with its neighborhood and the greater metropolis, bringing the campus's wealth of research capacity and human creativity to the challenges facing Chicago and urban life worldwide; <http://www.uic.edu/index.html/welcome.shtml>