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State orders hospital to continue OB services

By [Gale Scott](#)

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Citing Brooklyn's shortage of maternity beds and pediatric care, the State Department of Health has denied Continuum Health Partners' request to end obstetrics, neonatal and pediatric services at Long Island College Hospital. The department has also ordered the hospital to continue running several school-based health clinics that the hospital wanted to close at the end of the year.

At the same time, state health officials approved a \$3 million loan to the hospital, money available for hospitals that want to restructure to meet the mandates of the Berger Commission, the Pataki administration panel that targeted hospitals for downsizings, closures and mergers.

In a letter delivered Monday afternoon to Long Island College Hospital's interim chief executive officer, Dominick Stanzione, health department Deputy Commissioner James Clyne says those services are needed sorely in Brooklyn.

Both services are generally considered to be money-losers by hospitals.

"After careful review of all the facts the Department has determined that Long Island College Hospital's plan for the closure is not acceptable at this time."

A health department spokeswoman said there will be ongoing talks involving other hospitals in Brooklyn. It's not clear whether the discussions are being held around the idea of partnerships with other hospitals, or whether the DOH wants reassurance that other hospitals could pick up LICH's cases if DOH were to eventually approve the closures.

"It's not like closing these units would fully solve their financial problems anyway," says the spokeswoman.

Mr. Clyne's letter continues that the department was also disappointed to learn that the hospital has backed off on a prior commitment to run school-based health programs during the 2008-2009 school year.

"The department only recently learned that your position has changed," Mr. Clyne writes. The letter goes on to order Continuum to keep the programs open.

In informing Mr. Stanzione of the \$3 million loan, the department says it also "recognizes the financial strain that LICH is under" and with the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York, remains "committed to working with LICH, Continuum Health Partners, the local elected officials, local physicians and the community to turn LICH into a financially viable hospital."

But, he said, "Until there is greater clarity on this issue [of pediatric and maternity care] the department believes it is in the best interest of public health" for LICH to continue to run the programs.