

# Deal to Combine Lawyer Aurora Health with Atrium Blocked by State Council

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## THE SINGAPORE TIME



A state council has blocked plans by attorney Aurora Health to combine with Atrium Health in the southern system, refusing applications Tuesday to move forward with the deal.

Advocate could ask the board to reconsider the vote at the next meeting, so it's possible the union could go ahead anyway. But the denial is a roadblock to the deal, which system leaders have said they hope to close this year.

Advocate and Atrium announced plans in May to unite to create one of the largest health systems in the country, with 67 hospitals and more than 1,000 health care centers in six

Advocate filed requests for the change earlier this year with the Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board, which typically must approve hospital mergers and sales. The board voted 3-2 on Tuesday not to approve the applications.

Board members said they were concerned about the availability of information and their understanding of the deal, said Mark Silberman, a partner at law firm Benesch and former chief counsel to the state council, who is not involved in the deal but attended the meeting Tuesday.

However, some had opposed the union in recent months, including the Service Employees International Union Healthcare Illinois, who feared it would reduce the quality of healthcare in the Chicago area while increasing costs. After the deal was announced, a lawsuit was also filed in May accusing attorney Aurora of anticompetitive conduct, including suppressing competition and raising prices in Wisconsin.

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The lawyer did not immediately comment on Tuesday.

Under the proposed deal, Advocate Aurora and Atrium would form a joint operating company to be called Advocate Health, although Atrium's hospitals would retain the Atrium name, Advocate's hospitals in Wisconsin would retain the Aurora name, and Illinois hospitals would remain. would always be called Advocate. No money would change hands and existing assets would remain in the states where they are today.

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Attorney Aurora's president and CEO Jim Skogsbergh previously told the Tribune that the new attorney would be headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, although employees at its current headquarters in Downers Grove and Milwaukee are not expected to move. Many of those workers are already remote, and no one is expected to be fired because of the deal, Skogsbergh said. System leaders said the combination would create 20,000 additional jobs.

*More to come.*



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