

Suit seeks to block sale of hospitals

Concerns over ethical, religious directives cited

By Tillie Fong

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A former patient, a doctor and a citizens group sued Wednesday to block the sale of Lutheran and Good Samaritan hospitals to a Catholic organization.

"We're doing this because we want to preserve the broadest possible health-care opportunities and medical treatment for the people of Boulder and Jefferson counties who have been served with sound, broad medical practice for years," said Ed Kahn, special counsel at the Colorado Center on Law and Policy, which assisted in the lawsuit. "They deserve to continue to have that opportunity."

The suit, filed in Boulder District Court, lists the plaintiffs as Ami Sadler, a former patient at Good Samaritan Hospital in Lafayette; the nonprofit Compassion and Choices (both its national organization and its Colorado chapter); and Stephen Krebs, a doctor of internal medicine at Lutheran Medical Center.

It was announced last month that Community First Foundation of Arvada planned to sell its share of Lutheran and Good Samaritan hospitals to Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Health System for \$311 million.

Many in the community, including some medical staff at Lutheran Hospital, are opposed to the sale because of "ethical and religious directives," which many hospitals owned by Catholic organizations must follow. The directives would limit the types of health services that can be provided at the hospital.

The suit argues that the sale of the Lutheran and Good Samaritan would violate state law because it would change the "original charitable purpose" of the two hospitals.

The plaintiffs argue that for the sale to go through, Community First Foundation must show that the "original charitable purpose" of the two hospitals is "obsolete, inappropriate or impractical."

"The original charitable purpose gave rise to the (Community First) foundation, which was to support the hospital," said Frances Koncilja, one of the attorneys who filed the suit.

The suit was filed against Community First Foundation, Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Health System, Exempla Lutheran Medical Center, Exempla Good Samaritan Medical Center, Kaiser Hospital Asset

Management and Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of Colorado.

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