Modernizing California’s Hospital Disaster Preparedness Standards — The Future of Care Delivery in Southern California Hangs in the Balance

As Southern California hospitals recover from the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, they face a looming building standards mandate that will divert billions of dollars from patient and community investments. After decades of work and billions already spent to make California hospitals the gold standard for structural safety, hospitals are well-prepared to respond to earthquakes or other disasters. Now, it is time for lawmakers to focus on the future of care delivery by prioritizing policies that ensure ongoing emergency services and provide hospitals time to recover from the pandemic.

Every year, at hospitals in Southern California:

- **195,904** Births
- **5.6 million** Inpatient stays
- **1.5 million** ED visits
- **634,014** Directly employed and ‘ripple effect’ jobs
- **$116.6 billion** Total economic output
- **38%** Medi-Cal enrollees as a % of total population

Community priorities hospitals in Southern California would like to invest in:

- Expansion of outpatient and ambulatory care services
- Collaborative initiatives to reduce health disparities among diverse populations
- Neighborhood-based chronic disease management programs
- Expansion of medical respite beds for patients experiencing homelessness
- Workforce training and retention programs for nurses and allied health professionals
- Expansion of behavioral health prevention programs
- Partnerships to address homelessness and housing insecurity
- Reduction of carbon footprint through energy retrofits

To be better prepared for future disasters, hospitals say Southern California needs:

- Equipment and materials necessary to rapidly construct negative pressure rooms
- Advanced detection and care for infectious diseases
- Improved patient transportation services and evacuation capabilities
- Enhanced emergency communications capabilities
- Expanded EMS resources

Californiа hospitals are struggling

- **39%** of hospitals operate in the red
- More than **$10 billion** in losses, even after federal CARES Act funding (2020-21)