



March 15, 2023

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
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The Honorable Toni G. Atkins
pro Tem, California State Senate
1021 O Street, Suite 8518
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The Honorable Brian Jones
Senate Minority Leader
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The Honorable Nancy Skinner
Chair, Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Committee
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The Honorable Anthony Rendon
Speaker, California State Assembly
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The Honorable James Gallagher
Assembly Republican Leader
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The Honorable Phil Ting
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 8230
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RE: Request for Urgent Relief for Hospitals

Dear Governor Newsom:

We are writing, out of deep concern — as leaders of hospitals, as long-standing community servants, and as your constituents in California, to ask for your help to protect health care in our state. The care for millions of Californians is at risk.

In January, Madera Community Hospital in the Central Valley cared for its last patient. Dr. Jonathan Mayer, an OB-GYN who had cared for patients at the hospital, didn't mince words about the impact on the community: "If you have a car accident, you have to go to Fresno. If you have a heart attack or stroke, you've got to go to Fresno. If you're in labor, and there's a problem, you've got to go to Fresno or Merced ... Patients are going to die."

Some hospitals on more secure footing may not face closure, but are overflowing with patients who have no place else to go for care. And they are being forced to cut back on services offered to make ends meet as they face the same financial pressures that forced Madera Community Hospital to shut down.

Hospital closures and service cutbacks are happening because of huge losses sustained due to the pandemic, crippling inflationary increases — especially the cost of labor — and the severe underfunding of state and federal government programs: Medi-Cal and Medicare.

Dozens of California hospitals — many of which serve high numbers of Medi-Cal patients — are at great risk due to the fact that California pays just 74 cents for every dollar it costs to provide care to Medi-Cal patients. On the federal side, Medicare pays just 75 cents for every dollar it costs to care for millions of California seniors.

Failure to act now puts lives at risk.

As you consider budget priorities for this year, we ask that you provide an immediate \$1.5 billion lifeline to support care for Medi-Cal patients without considering any reductions in the Medi-Cal program.

This represents just 1% of all Medi-Cal funding and is an essential cash infusion to keep hospital doors open and services available in the short term. In the future, we will need to work together to improve Medi-Cal funding so that access to Medi-Cal services is sustainable for the long term.

In January, the nationally respected consulting firm Kaufman Hall affirmed the likelihood that in the coming months, even more hospitals will be forced to close or reduce services. This is a deeply troubling prospect for communities throughout California as hospital margins in the western United States were down 69% in 2022 compared to 2019. That's the worst of any region in the country, and while talk of "margins" often carries overtones of Wall Street and profits, for hospitals they mean something quite different. Low or negative margins simply mean hospitals have inadequate resources for nurses, blood supplies, X-ray technicians, behavioral health specialists, and more.

Without help, cities and towns throughout the state are on track to lose vital community pillars of health care services and jobs: Visalia, Porterville, Hollister, Bakersfield, Humboldt County, all of Imperial County, pockets of Los Angeles serving our most vulnerable communities, and many more.

The crisis is not theoretical. It's happening now, before our very eyes. What has transpired in Madera County will, without question, be replicated in other parts of California unless hospitals get relief. And once a hospital closes, it is incredibly difficult to reopen at all, let alone reopen with the same level of services that Californians need and deserve.

The time to act is now, before more Californians lose access to vital health care services.

Sincerely,

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Alameda Hospital
Alameda

Kevin Kramer
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Alturas

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San Luis Obispo

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Sierra Vista Regional Medical Center
San Luis Obispo

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Providence Little Company of Mary Medical
Center San Pedro
San Pedro

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Kaiser Permanente San Rafael Medical Center
San Rafael

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San Ramon Regional Medical Center
San Ramon

Lala Gharibian
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Kindred Hospital Santa Ana
Santa Ana

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Arie Dejong
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Santa Barbara

Ron Werft
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Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital
Santa Barbara

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Santa Clara

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Dignity Health Dominican Hospital Santa Cruz
Santa Cruz

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CEO, Bay & Valley Hospitals
Sutter Health Sutter Maternity & Surgery Center
of Santa Cruz
Santa Cruz

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President & CEO
Dignity Health Marian Regional Medical Center
Santa Maria

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Chief Executive
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Santa Monica

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Kaiser Permanente Santa Rosa Medical Center
Santa Rosa

Charles Kassis
Chief Executive
Providence Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital
Santa Rosa

Tristan Ivy
Chief Executive Officer
Santa Rosa Behavioral Healthcare Hospital
Santa Rosa

Dave Cheney
CEO, Bay & Valley Hospitals
Sutter Health Sutter Santa Rosa Regional
Hospital
Santa Rosa

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Adventist Health Selma
Selma

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Sherman Oaks Hospital
Sherman Oaks

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Solvang

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Chief Executive Officer
Sonoma Valley Hospital
Sonoma

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Adventist Health Sonora
Sonora

Clint Purvance, MD
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Barton Health
South Lake Tahoe

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Kaiser Permanente South San Francisco Medical
Center
South San Francisco

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St. Helena

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Adventist Health Dameron Hospital
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Center
Stockton

Donald Wiley
President & CEO
Dignity Health St. Joseph's Medical Center
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Temecula

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Chief Executive Officer
Twin Cities Community Hospital
Templeton

Natalie Mussi
Chief Executive Officer
Los Robles Hospital & Medical Center
Thousand Oaks

Natalie Mussi
Chief Executive Officer
Los Robles Hospital & Medical Center - Thousand
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Tracy

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Whittier

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President & CEO
PIH Health Whittier Hospital
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cc: The Honorable Members of the California State Legislature
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