

From: [Zeena Al-Tai](#)
To: [ClerkoftheBoard](#)
Subject: Public Comment BOS 6/17/24 Item No. 9
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Ventura County Board of Supervisors,

My name is Zeena Al-Tai, I am a family medicine/obstetrics physician in the Ventura County Ambulatory Care department. I am writing to you about my concerns regarding the proposed budget for 2024-2025, specifically as it pertains to the proposed number of physicians and allotted salary range. My statement as a private citizen does not necessarily reflect the view of the HCA or the County of Ventura Government, but I feel that it is important to express my viewpoint on this matter.

I joined the County workforce one year ago, after being at another organization for almost 2 years, where I experienced significant burnout and stress due to the lack of autonomy, lack of physician colleagues to help with the growing patient needs, and lack of respect from the administrators. What that position did not lack, however, was a very solid base salary and significant opportunity for bonus pay. Despite this excellent pay rate, though, I could not remain at that organization due to my burnout, and I felt lucky in finding a position within the County that provided everything that I felt was missing from the position I vacated: a strong group of physician colleagues on whom I could rely and trust, respect from upper administration, and a better work-life balance. I took on this position, despite the significant pay cut that came with it, because I felt that working with the County and the underserved patients would be the best thing for my mental health.

While some of these improvements remain, I have to say that I am very worried about the possibility of reduced physician workforce within the County, as suggested within this proposed budget. Reducing the number of positions or hours for physicians will mean that all of us will have to work many more hours than we already do, in order to meet the needs of our patients. When we asked for clarification on this proposal from the County last week, we were met with shock and statements about how "they had never seen these numbers before and they would get back to us about them." They never did. This feels incredibly disrespectful and fosters a lack of trust that I had with regard to the administrators of the HCA.

The pay cut I took when joining the County was not something that I currently regret, although inflation has continued to worsen and we physicians are just as affected by the increased cost of living as everyone else in the county. However, the proposed decrease in salary range feels like a particularly sharp slap in the face to those of us who are constantly being asked to work more hours, see more patients, and answer more inbox messages at all hours of the day in order to maintain patient satisfaction scores.

I urge you all to please consider NOT approving the budget as it is currently proposed to you. Part of my concern is that it may not even be accurate, as stated to us last week by the HCA administrators themselves, which makes me wonder what other kinds of errors or falsehoods are present within the proposed budget. But if it IS accurate, then it is insulting and demoralizing to find that the HCA wants to reduce the number of physicians while

simultaneously reducing the salary of those of us who will be left to pick up the slack that will be left behind.

Thank you for your consideration.

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