
Setting the Standard in Health Care Excellence

July 23, 2024

Board of Supervisors
County of Ventura
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, California 93009

Subject: Ratification of the Appointment of Diana Zenner as an Extra-Help Employee to Fill a Critically Needed Position Related to Hospital Operations, Retroactive to July 1, 2024; Certify the Nature of Ms. Zenner's Employment and Appointment in Accordance with Government Code Section 7522.56, Subdivision (f)(1).

Recommendations:

1. Certify the nature of employment of Diana Zenner as Senior Consultant, Hospital Operations assisting the Health Care Agency (HCA) and find that her employment is necessary to fill a critically needed position before 180 days have passed since she retired from the County of Ventura in accordance with Government Code section 7522.56 subdivision (f)(1) for the reasons set forth in this letter; and
2. Ratify the appointment of Diana Zenner as Senior Consultant, Hospital Operations, extra-help employee assisting the HCA to manage hospital operations, retroactive to July 1, 2024.

Reason for Ratification:

The Board was not in session when we reached an agreement with Ms. Zenner.

Fiscal Impact:

Mandatory:	No
Source of Funding:	VCMC Operating Revenues/Collections
Funding Match Required:	None
Impact on Other Departments:	N/A

Current Fiscal Year Budget:

Current FY 2024-25 Budget Projections for Ventura County Medical System #3300				
	Adopted Budget	Adjusted Budget	Projected Actual	Estimated Savings/(Deficit)
Expenditures	\$720,985,484	\$720,985,484	\$720,985,484	\$0
Revenue	\$721,404,225	\$721,404,225	\$721,404,225	\$0
Operational Income/(Loss)	\$418,741	\$418,741	\$418,741	\$0

Sufficient revenue and appropriations are included in the FY 24-25 budget. The operational income includes "Operating Transfers In" that are primarily attributed to County contribution.

Strategic Plan Priority:

The item presented in this Board letter supports the Healthy, Safe, and Resilient Communities strategic priority of the County Strategic Plan as it is designed to meet the goal of providing access to quality healthcare required for our community to thrive.

Discussion:

Ms. Zenner retired on April 26, 2024, and currently receives a pension from the County. Her appointment as an extra-help employee is critical to maintaining hospital operations, ensuring a smooth transition to her successor, and the continuity of services. Ms. Zenner has over 30 years of healthcare experience, including 7 years of service to this County. Notably, she served as the Chief Operating Officer for the hospital for 5 of those years. Her extensive background and intimate knowledge of our hospital's operations make her uniquely qualified for this position. Her expertise will be invaluable in supporting the HCA's ongoing efforts to maintain efficient hospital operations during this transitional period. This temporary appointment will allow for knowledge transfer and ensure that essential services continue uninterrupted.

Pursuant to Government Code section 7522.56, a retired person shall not serve, be employed by, or be employed through a contract directly by, a public employer in the same public retirement system from which the retiree receives the benefit without reinstatement from retirement, with limited exceptions. One exception is when the retired person has skills needed to perform work of limited duration. Even in that case, County retirees are generally required to observe a 180-day separation from service ("sit out period") before returning to work for the County, after which they may work up to 960 hours per fiscal year. Government Code section 7522.56, subdivision (f)(1) provides an exception to the 180 day rule, allowing a retiree to be employed before the 180-day period has elapsed if the County certifies both the nature of the employment and that "the employment is necessary to fill a critically needed position." Furthermore, section 7522.56, subdivision (f)(1) stipulates that such an appointment must be approved by the governing body at a public meeting as part of the regular meeting agenda.

Given Ms. Diana Zenner's extensive and unique experience and background, coupled with the crucial timing of our hospital operations, I believe it is critical that we bring Ms. Zenner back to assist the HCA for a limited period. Her expertise is vital to ensure the continuity and efficiency of our hospital services. Ms. Zenner's willingness to return and contribute her knowledge is greatly appreciated. Her temporary appointment would significantly benefit our healthcare system and the community we serve by maintaining operational excellence and facilitating a smooth transition in leadership.

The funds for Ms. Zenner's employment are available within the HCA's existing year's budget. As an extra help employee, Ms. Zenner will be paid at the rate of her previous hourly base rate and will not receive any additional benefits or incentives.

We respectfully request the Board's approval for this appointment to be retroactive to July 1, 2024, and recognize the significant value Ms. Zenner's experience brings to our healthcare system.

This letter has been reviewed by the County Counsel, the Auditor-Controller's Office, and the County Executive Office. If you have any questions regarding this item, please call John Fankhauser, M.D., Chief Executive Officer, County Hospitals, at 805-652-6058.



John Fankhauser, M.D.
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