

June 4, 2024

Chair Kelly Long

Board of Supervisors

Public Comment Agenda #63

Santa Paula Hospital Proposed Closure of OB and ICU Units

Hello Chair Long and Board Members, CEO Dr. Johnson and staff.

I am Laura Espinosa, President of Santa Paula Latino Town Hall pleased to offer public comment regarding the proposed budget recommendation to close the two essential units at Santa Paula Hospital. I have provided to you researched data in a previous communication. I briefly note the addition of the County of Ventura 2024-2027 Strategic Plan that includes the following at the top of the summary of strategic priorities:

Healthy, Safe, and Resilient Communities

Maintain the highest standard of health and remain one of the safest and most resilient counties in the nation.

Goal number 1 reads

1) Provide equitable and timely access to quality healthcare, mental health, and public health services. This comes from one of the most important guiding documents of our County.

A shut down of the two units renders the entire Santa Clara Valley from East Ventura, Santa Paula, Fillmore, and Piru with a county safety net system of the haves and the have nots. It leaves 50,000 plus residents at risk of a *lower* standard of care provided in other districts of the county, *less safe* and further *erodes the resiliency* of the poorest city in the county.

It feels like a sense of betrayal after so many years of working collaboratively in monthly meetings with the various departments of the Health Care Agency in order to provide increased access to quality care for our community. After meeting as part of the Blue Ribbon Committee since 2019, my own family was impacted in the most severe way. After suggestions from the Committee to provide services that increase revenue, a MRI was purchased and sited at Santa Paula Hospital. When it was moved, I don't know. Last August, a close family member had a seizure and was taken to Santa Paula ER. After he was stabilized, he was transported to VCMC because the new MRI had been moved to VCMC to serve *that* community. The night he was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer left our family devastated, and no different than other families, asking why. Had the MRI still been at SP Hospital, it would not have cured him. The same wonderful care he received at SP Hospital, he also received at VCMC. The difference is having the confidence that our local hospital will offer access to the highest quality care, the

best equipment to diagnose promptly and a plan of treatment. This is what everyone deserves no matter the zip code. The residents no longer have that confidence.

I think this body knows the right thing to do.

Laura Espinosa

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