



"Citrus Capital of the World"

City of Santa Paula

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June 12, 2024

Ventura County Board of Supervisors
800 S. Victoria Ave.
Ventura, CA 93009

RE: Proposed Santa Paula Hospital Closures

Dear Members of the Board of Supervisors,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Santa Paula City Council and the residents of our city and the greater Santa Clara Valley. We are deeply concerned about the proposed closure of the birthing and intensive care units at the Santa Paula Hospital as part of the Ventura County Health Care Agency's budget plan. While we understand the financial challenges faced by the hospital, the closure of these essential services would have a profound negative impact on the health and well-being of our community, particularly on our minority and vulnerable population.

The Santa Paula Hospital is a vital resource for the rural, largely Latino communities of Santa Paula, Fillmore, and Piru. The closure of the birthing and ICU services would severely limit timely access to critical health care, especially for families without cars who would struggle to travel the 15 miles to the Ventura County Medical Center. Our community deserves better than to have essential health services removed without adequate consideration of the broader implications.

It is important to recognize that the supervisorial district, which encompasses our region, is the only region in the county experiencing substantial growth. Neglecting to support this area demonstrates a myopic vision and a failure to commit to the minority populations that Ventura County professes to care about. Quality health care should be accessible to all residents, regardless of their socioeconomic status or geographical location. Unfortunately, the unforeseen long term consequences of these actions could impact the steady removal of other health services, the employment of long time physicians, or cause those patients who have relied on the Ventura County Healthcare system to follow practitioners elsewhere.

We are not requesting additional funding but rather a commitment to maintaining essential health services in our community. The potential closure of these units has understandably caused anxiety and frustration among our residents. The community was not adequately informed or involved in the discussions leading to this proposal, which further erodes trust and cooperation between the residents and county leadership. The Blue Ribbon committee's inactivity and underutilization in the past year, ahead of the proposed budget cuts, is a stark reminder that transparent and inclusive

governance is essential. Without it, the residents of the Santa Clara Valley will now have to suffer the consequences.

While we understand the financial pressures, it is crucial to consider the human impact of such decisions. The county's commitment to health care services in the Santa Clara Valley must remain strong. We urge the Board of Supervisors to explore alternative solutions that do not involve the closure of critical health services. The financial deficit of \$16 million, while significant, should be addressed in a manner that does not disproportionately harm our community. As pointed out by many, the county's budget of \$2.86 billion should be able to absorb this deficit without compromising essential health services.

The City supports this request as the intent of Council's adopted Legislative Platform is to "*protect and enhance public health, safety, and welfare*" as well as "*aid the City's delivery of high-quality services to its residents.*" Furthermore, one of Council's goals in the adopted two-year Strategic Plan, Section D. Connected and Healthy Community, is to "*...foster regional partnerships that create a safe and healthy community to live, work, and thrive.*"

For these reasons and more, we implore you to reconsider the proposed closures. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Jonathan Royas, Deputy City Manager at 805-921-0575 or via email at jroyas@spcity.org.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Respectfully,



Leslie Cornejo
Mayor

cc: City Council
Sevet Johnson, Ventura County Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Barry Zimmerman, VCHCA Director
John Fankhauser, M.D., CEO VCMC/Santa Paula Hospital
City Manager