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Dear Monterey County Board of Supervisors,

Monterey County as a whole rejoiced last year when we learned that Natividad Medical Center had been awarded, by an independent panel of health care professionals, special designation as Level II Trauma Center.

A local trauma center is long overdue, which is why today's decision to move forward with the implementation of the Level II Trauma Center at NMC is so critical. It will not only benefit trauma patients but will improve the overall quality of health care for our entire community.

We question the motivation of those who would be against moving forward with implementation. We are referring specifically to Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital System and its latest ploy to delay progress at NMC, which will have damaging consequences for our community.

As we all know, SVMHS had unsuccessfully vied for Trauma Center designation. Having failed in its bid, SVMHS officials have submitted a last-minute overture at a "partnership" between NMC and SVMH. In the interest of this "partnership," SVMHS would have county leaders delay Trauma Center implementation at NMC.

Let us be very clear: NMC becoming a Trauma Center II is separate, apart and distinct from whatever might come to pass with SVMHS.

Make no mistake: Failure to take action today to proceed with implementation would be failure in Supervisors' leadership to put the best interests of our community first.

Let's look at the facts:

- Two independent consultants, Bishop and Abaris, have concluded that the Trauma Center at NMC can be profitable by millions of dollars. The Board of Supervisors ought to rely on their impartial advice.
- SVMHS' letter of intent dated January 23, 2014 to form a JPA with NMC is not really about establishing any true partnership. As reported by the local press: "Under the JPA, SVMHS' south Salinas 269-bed hospital would remain under the direct control of the SVMH board of directors. However, the deal, if approved by all parties, would require the transfer of all NMC assets, including its 172-bed hospital, to the new authority."

We are not necessarily against a partnership with SVMH if it is in the interest of putting our community first and follows the process delineated in AB276, "The Central Coast Hospital Authority Act." It is clear that SVMHS is putting SVMHS first and everything and everyone else second and that they are not honestly interested in a real partnership with NMC. The only thing SVMHS is interested in today is the trauma center because they know that it is profitable to a hospital and can support other programs.

Real critical life-saving services are at stake, but SVMHS is playing politics and CAO Lew Bauman seems to be playing along.

- CAO Lew Bauman's memo, Exhibit E on today's Board agenda, suggests that the payer mix of future trauma center patients will be too poor to be profitable based on a narrow interpretation. To put it bluntly, the memo's assertions are faulty and fraught with baseless assumptions. Certain patients don't go to NMC today precisely because it does not have a trauma center; if it did, it is very likely that patients would rather be flown within the county rather than outside the county to another trauma center 50 miles away especially when minutes are a matter of life and death. Mr. Bauman surely knows this, which makes us question what are the ulterior motives at play for putting forth such illogical figures?
- It is unclear how SVMHS determined that the number of trauma care cases from Monterey County decreased by 28% countywide and that the payer mix in the region has changed for the worst. It is important to note that NMC's projections of revenue do not take into account the business that would come from the surrounding counties that we all know will very likely come to our Trauma Center. Furthermore, the implementation of the Affordable Care Act means more people will gain coverage and many will gain commercial coverage through Covered CA. Can it honestly be said that payer mix will change for the worse when thousands of uninsured are gaining coverage every day?

We urge the Board of Supervisors to put our community first and not delay the implementation of the Trauma Center at NMC any further.

It would be unconscionable to play politics with the health and safety of our community.

In Unity,



Deborah Narvaez
Regional Director
Service Employees International Union, Local 521