

March 27, 2019

Oregon State Legislature
House Committee on Health Care
900 Court St. NE
Salem Oregon 97301

Re: House Bill 3076 – Community Benefit

Chair Andrea Salinas and Members of the House Health Care Committee:

At Bay Area Hospital our commitment to our community in the form of community benefit is near the top of our mission, because we believe that by reaching outside our walls to help improve the health of our community, we further contribute to the wellness and well-being of our patients and their families. For that reason, we oppose the inflexible and prescriptive changes to community benefit as envisioned in HB 3076 and urge you to oppose it as well.

In 2018, we contributed some 60 million dollars via community benefit programs. But the real impact is more than dollar figures, it's in the improvements in health that we drive with that funding. Our community benefit activities are centered on programs and funding that respond to the unique needs of the populations that we serve. We conduct community health needs assessments every three years in which we spend a great deal of time identifying health disparities in our community alongside partner organizations and governmental actors. We then develop action plans and funding strategies to address the identified needs.

Coos County has a high incidence of cancer, heart disease and diabetes. Bay Area Hospital has a robust education program for the community. In addition, we do a free health screening annually targeted at our population's needs assessment.

Bay Area Hospital partnerships with local organizations to meet the community health needs through our SWOCC Nursing program. Recently, Bay Area Hospital Community Foundation made a significant gift for the construction of a new health and science building that will house the nursing program at Southwestern Oregon Community College. The foundation also supports South Coast Hospice and awards grants to local non-profit organizations.

Our community has seen improvements health care coverage since the full implementation of the Affordable Care Act. As a result, the need for charity care has fallen. That's something we applaud, as it means people are accessing the coverage they need at the time that it's needed. While charity care has begun to creep up again, we believe that imposing high thresholds for charity care would lead to unintended consequences.

In short, community benefit is a transparent program that is working well in our community. We object to prescriptive policy that could engender changes, which do not serve our unique community needs. We urge you to oppose HB 3076 and instead allow hospitals to engage in a collaborative policy process, which centers on driving health outcomes.

Thank you for your service and please reach out with any questions about our programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Patterson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Samuel Patterson
Chief Financial Officer