



MYRNA MELGAR

June 16, 2022

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary of Health and Human Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra,

I am writing to ask for your assistance to save Laguna Honda Hospital, a critical institution in San Francisco's District 7, which I represent on the City and County Board of Supervisors. As you may be aware, findings stemming from a compliance process led to CMS's decision to terminate the hospital's ability to participate in Medicare and Medicaid Reimbursement Programs. San Francisco's Department of Public Health has been working closely with CMS to go through the recertification process, which I am confident will be successful. I am asking for your help to reverse or postpone the concurrent requirement that we relocate the nearly 800 residents of Laguna Honda by September 15, 2022—a very difficult requirement given the dire shortage of Medicare/Medicaid-eligible skilled nursing beds in California. Most importantly, this requirement puts the health and safety of these very vulnerable and fragile residents, my constituents, at great risk.

For over 150 years, Laguna Honda Hospital has been a refuge for people of all walks of life to receive life-saving health care, particularly for those with extraordinary circumstances and complicated health issues. Laguna Honda Hospital and Rehabilitation Center is a 62-acre campus located in the district I represent. The prized institution serves all of San Francisco and is the largest skilled nursing facilities in the country. It is also the only publicly owned facility in California. Laguna Honda provides 34% of all the skilled nursing beds in San Francisco.

While the hospital is taking CMS's findings very seriously and has urgent efforts afoot to honor the recertification requirement to relocate its 800 residents, anyone familiar with the medical system knows how difficult it is to place patients in facilities that accept Medicare or Medicaid. CMS has made a near impossible demand to find nearby beds that accept these programs, so patients will likely be relocated far away from their families and friends in San Francisco. Twenty percent of the hospital's residents have mental

health issues along with other disabilities. This disruption will be traumatizing and perhaps catastrophic for some residents who have grown comfortable with their surroundings and skilled and dedicated nursing team that has helped stabilize them over the years.

As the Board of Supervisors representative of the district, I am thankful to have this compassionate institution that offers life-saving care for my constituents by skilled doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals, whose jobs will also be affected by closure. As the only Latina on the Board of Supervisors, and the only one elected in San Francisco in 25 years, I am especially proud that Laguna Honda offers unique linguistic and culturally appropriate services: a Spanish ward, and a Cantonese ward, where monolingual residents get services and care in their own language.

I would very much like to meet with you to further discuss this important institution and remedies to this situation.

Sincerely,



Myrna Melgar
Supervisor, District 7
San Francisco Board of Supervisors