



Office of Mayor and
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April 14, 2015

The Honorable Rob Bonta
Chairman,
Assembly Health Committee
Room 6005
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 911 (Brough) Saddleback San Clemente Hospital – SUPPORT
Hearing Scheduled April 21, 2014**

Dear Assembly Member Bonta:

On behalf of the San Clemente City Council, I respectfully request your support for AB 911 (Brough) which would allow Saddleback Memorial Medical Center in San Clemente (SMMC) to operate the Emergency Department (ED) on the San Clemente campus without the concomitant acute care services on site, but which would continue to meet the standards for those acute care services under its consolidated license. The bill would also authorize Saddleback Memorial Medical Center in San Clemente, to continue, under its existing license, to provide emergency medical services to patients in the region if it otherwise transforms its delivery of services. MemorialCare Health System, the hospital owner, is considering shutting down its hospital and emergency room to build a three story medical pavilion offering a wide range of outpatient services.

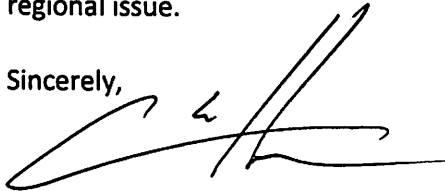
It is important to note that AB 911 does not propose changing the hospital and emergency structure throughout the state, but proposes a standalone ER solely for this unique geographic region in South Orange County. This hospital has served the populations of San Clemente (65,000), Dana Point (34,000), San Juan Capistrano (36,000), and many tourists/visitors to the area for over 40 years. It has served as these communities' sole emergency care facility and will leave a 40-mile void in emergency care access between Oceanside and Mission Viejo if it closes.

There are two main concerns with the potential loss of the emergency room: 1) financial impact, and 2) health impact. Fiscally, the city's public safety costs would increase, thus costing taxpayers more as local paramedics would have to deploy out of town, onto the already congested I-5 freeway on all 911 calls. This would make ambulances and their firefighter operators less available in town.

As for the health impacts, these would be critical to those in need should the emergency room close. Saddleback San Clemente Hospital currently treats 15,000 emergency room patients per year and admits over 4,000 patients per year. It also provides over 200 jobs for the growing community. It is important to recognize the growing population in our region with the new Rancho Mission Viejo development to the east of San Clemente already well underway building 14,000 new homes, with many families already living here. The loss of the emergency room will impact not only the residents of San Clemente, but also these new families that will continue moving into this area for years to come. To close the emergency room, would mean citizens would not have access to quality emergency care services and we would see adverse effects on community health if it closes. When emergency care is needed, people need it immediately. With traffic congestion on the freeways a regular occurrence, too many people needing immediate care would be jeopardized. Emergency rooms remain an important public safety component for our communities. AB 911 would allow the hospital to retain an emergency room to ensure their healthcare is not compromised.

Please consider how important this issue is to the citizens residing and visiting this region. We respectfully request your support for AB 911. Thank you for your consideration of this important regional issue.

Sincerely,



Chris Hamm
Mayor

cc: Members, Assembly Health Committee
Roger Dunstan, Chief Consultant, Assembly Health Committee
Senator Pat Bates
Assembly Member Bill Brough
Assembly Member Brian Maienschein
Senator Ed Hernández
Senator Janet Nguyen
San Clemente City Council
League of California Cities