

Tuesday's Letters to the Editor Press Democrat



Yes on Measure BB

EDITOR: I urge neighbors to vote yes on Measure BB, which would allow the North Sonoma County Healthcare District to sell Healdsburg District Hospital to a secular affiliate of Providence St. Joseph Health. This is necessary to retain local inpatient and emergency department services.

From my previous experience as the manager of health policy for the University of California's clinical, teaching and research enterprise, I am concerned about the shrinking of our health care infrastructure.

Neighbors have shared legitimate concerns. But I am a pragmatic believer in the need to ensure access to health care. Here's why:

Hospital capacity. Hospitals before the pandemic increasingly "boarded" patients in emergency department hallways as throughput to rooms "upstairs" remained unavailable. Patient care inevitably suffers.

Moreover, hospitals may need to close during fires and/or earthquakes. Reducing hospital capacity in a region already experiencing a succession of wildfires during a pandemic seems short-sighted.

Time to treatment. Heart attacks and strokes may increase significantly following wildfires. If the emergency departments of remaining hospitals are already full, patient outcomes may suffer.

The district tax issue. Economies of scale dictate affiliation agreements to keep local services open. If we perceive value in retaining local services, this shouldn't negate the need for the district tax.

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Healdsburg

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