



August 13, 2026

**The Honorable Jeff Gorell, Chair
The Honorable Vianey Lopez, Vice Chair
The Honorable Matt LaVere
The Honorable Kelly Long
The Honorable Janice S. Parvin**

Ventura County Board of Supervisors
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, California 93009

Re: Santa Paula Hospital — An End to Racial Inequity in Health Care

Dear Chair Gorell, Vice Chair Lopez, Supervisor LaVere, Supervisor Long, and Supervisor Parvin:

On behalf of the **Santa Paula Latino Town Hall**, we write with an urgent and deeply held message to the Ventura County Board of Supervisors:

We demand an end to racial and geographic inequity in health care.

Santa Paula, Fillmore, and Piru deserve a hospital that properly serves our community.

The future of Santa Paula Hospital is not simply a question of facilities, budgets, or construction options. It is a question of **equity, public health, racial justice, community safety, and the value Ventura County places on the lives of the people who live in the Santa Clara Valley.**

Santa Paula Latino Town Hall has spent decades advocating for the residents of Santa Paula, Fillmore, Piru, and surrounding communities. We have participated in County, city, school, health, and community discussions because we believe government has an obligation to listen to the people it serves.

Today, we are asking the Board of Supervisors to listen once again—and this time, to act.

An End to Racial Inequity in Health Care

For far too long, residents of the Santa Clara Valley have experienced healthcare disparities that should be unacceptable in Ventura County.

The approximately **10-year disparity in life expectancy between Santa Paula residents and residents in other parts of Ventura County**, as reflected in Ventura County Public Health data, should be an urgent warning to every elected official in this County.

We must ask a difficult but necessary question:

Would this level of healthcare disparity be accepted if it existed in Camarillo, Thousand Oaks, or another more affluent community?

Would residents of those communities be asked to accept substantially reduced hospital services, longer distances to hospital care, and fewer healthcare resources?

We do not believe they would.

And we should not accept it here.

The residents of Santa Paula, Fillmore, and Piru are not asking for special treatment.

We are asking for equal treatment.

We Deserve a Hospital—Not a Replacement That Leaves Our Community Behind

Santa Paula Latino Town Hall respectfully but firmly urges the Board of Supervisors and Ventura County Health Care Agency to **preserve hospital-level care in the Santa Clara Valley and pursue retrofitting and modernization of the existing Santa Paula Hospital as an immediate and necessary investment in our community.**

Retrofitting and modernizing the existing hospital should not be viewed as an **end-all solution**, nor should it be presented as an alternative that eliminates the need for future investment.

Rather, it should be viewed as a **necessary investment and bridge to the future** while Ventura County develops and implements the promised capital improvement projects for a broader Santa Clara Valley health and social-service campus, including a potential new hospital and senior assisted-living facility.

Our community cannot be expected to wait years for a future project while the existing hospital deteriorates, or hospital-level services are reduced.

Nor should the County assume that there will be **no gap in services** while a new health and social-service complex is being planned, financed, approved, designed, constructed, and brought into operation. Large public capital projects routinely take years and are subject to financing, permitting, construction, staffing, regulatory, and other delays.

Our residents need care during that entire period.

That is why the County must have a clear continuity-of-care plan that protects hospital, emergency, clinic, behavioral-health, public-health, and social-service access throughout any transition.

Retrofitting the existing hospital does **not** mean abandoning the vision for a new health and social-service complex. To the contrary, it provides an opportunity to maintain and strengthen essential services now while the County plans responsibly for the future.

Retrofitting today must not become an excuse to stop investing tomorrow.

A commitment to the existing hospital must be accompanied by a long-term commitment to the Santa Clara Valley's healthcare infrastructure, including the future hospital, clinics, behavioral-health services, public-health programs, social services, senior services, workforce development, and other community investments necessary to support a healthy and economically vibrant region.

Our community has repeatedly made its position clear.

At the Santa Paula Latino Town Hall healthcare forum, **“Your Voice, Our Community, Our Healthcare,” on May 26, 2026**, residents expressed their concerns regarding the future of local hospital care.

Those concerns continued at the **Health Care Agency Forum at Fillmore City Hall on August 3, 2026**, and the **Blue-Ribbon Committee meeting on August 7, 2026**.

The message has been consistent:

Fillmore, Santa Paula, and Piru residents do not want a glorified urgent-care facility in place of a full-service hospital.

We need meaningful access to emergency and hospital-level care close to home.

Medi-Cal and the Residents Who Depend on This System

Santa Clara Valley has the second largest Medi-Cal population and a significant number of residents who depend upon publicly funded healthcare and social services.

At a time when federal healthcare policy and funding are facing substantial changes—including provisions associated with the legislation commonly referred to as **H.R. 1**—our communities cannot afford to reduce local access to hospital care.

Potential reductions in coverage, changes to eligibility and renewal requirements, and new administrative or work requirements could result in more residents becoming uninsured or delaying necessary medical care.

That would place **additional pressure on emergency departments, clinics, first responders, families, and local government—not less.**

The answer to a financially challenged healthcare system cannot simply be to reduce services in the community that already experiences some of the greatest healthcare disparities.

Our Community Has Been Doing Its Part

For more than two decades, Santa Paula Latino Town Hall has worked constructively with elected officials, County agencies, school districts, healthcare leaders, community organizations, and residents.

In 2019, Santa Paula Latino Town Hall led efforts to reopen the Obstetrics Unit at Santa Paula Hospital. We demanded community meetings in Santa Paula and Fillmore because residents deserved a meaningful voice in determining the future of healthcare in their own communities.

We have participated.

We have advocated.

We have volunteered.

We have offered solutions.

We have done our part.

Now we are asking the County to do its part.

Healthcare Equity Must Include Economic Equity

Healthcare cannot be separated from the economic future of the Santa Clara Valley.

Santa Paula, Fillmore, and Piru contribute substantially to the economic foundation of Ventura County. Our residents work throughout the region:

- 1) Fillmore pays approximately 85% of its property tax to Ventura County.
- 2) Santa Paula has the highest sales tax rate at 9.25% amongst Ventura County cities and of that, 0.25% also goes to the County.
- 3) Santa Paula also pays 80% of all property tax to the county. Our businesses contribute to the County's tax base.

Our agricultural industry and workers contribute to the prosperity of the entire County. Yet our communities continue to experience significant economic and health disparities. That is not sustainable.

Young people who grow up in the Santa Clara Valley should be able to imagine a future in which they can attend college, pursue healthcare careers, establish businesses, find good jobs,

purchase or rent affordable housing, raise families, and obtain high-quality healthcare without having to leave their community.

A hospital can be more than a healthcare facility.

It can be an **economic anchor, workforce-development center, training site, source of good jobs, and foundation for community investment.**

That is why we believe the County should explore a comprehensive Santa Clara Valley healthcare and economic-development strategy rather than treating the hospital as an isolated financial problem.

We Need Transparency Before Irreversible Decisions Are Made

We are also deeply concerned about the financial assumptions underlying the proposed alternatives.

Before the County makes a decision that could permanently reduce hospital services in Santa Paula, the public deserves a complete and transparent accounting of the County's healthcare finances.

We ask the Board to make publicly available to the greatest extent permitted by law:

1. All grants, incentive payments, supplemental payments, reimbursements, and other healthcare-related revenues received by the County and Health Care Agency;
2. How those funds have been allocated and spent;
3. The financial performance of major County healthcare facilities and programs;
4. Administrative and executive costs associated with the Health Care Agency;
5. The projected capital and operating costs of each proposed Santa Paula Hospital alternative;
6. The anticipated financial impact on Medi-Cal, Medicare, private insurers, patients, and local taxpayers;
7. The projected cost of providing transportation and alternative healthcare services if hospital services are reduced or eliminated; and
8. A complete comparison of the cost, feasibility, timeline, and operational consequences of **retrofitting and modernizing the existing Santa Paula Hospital** versus constructing or implementing the proposed alternatives.

The community should not be asked to choose among alternatives without access to the underlying financial facts.

Significant Deadlines, Leadership Turnover, and the Need for Accountability

The County is facing significant deadlines and challenges that make immediate action even more important. Among the most significant is the approaching **2030 retrofitting deadline for Santa Paula Hospital**. This deadline should not be used as a reason to postpone critical decisions or

allow the existing hospital and its infrastructure to deteriorate while the County waits for a future capital improvement project.

To the contrary, the approaching deadline requires the County to act now to preserve hospital capacity, protect patient safety, maintain regulatory compliance, and ensure that the residents of Santa Paula, Fillmore, and Piru continue to have meaningful access to hospital-level care.

At the same time, the Ventura County Health Care Agency has experienced substantial executive leadership turnover, including the recent arrest of the HCA Chief Compliance Officer. These circumstances raise legitimate questions about institutional continuity, oversight, compliance, financial management, and the County's ability to maintain consistent long-term leadership during a period when major healthcare decisions are being considered.

These concerns are further underscored by the **California Department of Health Care Services' August 12, 2026, announcement of new enforcement actions involving Ventura County Behavioral Health (VCBH)** concerning access to behavioral-health services for Medi-Cal members. According to DHCS, a portion of VCBH funding will be temporarily withheld while the County is monitored as it works toward corrective action.

We do not raise these matters to prejudice any individual or to suggest that circumstances involving one department automatically determine the performance of another. We raise them because they demonstrate the importance of **strong oversight, institutional continuity, transparent decision-making, compliance, financial accountability, and measurable performance standards** throughout the Health Care Agency.

At a time when the County is considering decisions that could fundamentally alter healthcare delivery in the Santa Clara Valley, the Board of Supervisors must ensure that the County has the leadership, institutional knowledge, financial controls, and accountability systems necessary to carry out those decisions responsibly.

These circumstances make **greater transparency, continuity planning, and immediate action—not delay—essential.**

The Board should establish clear timelines, measurable benchmarks, public reporting requirements, responsible officials, and accountability mechanisms concerning the future of Santa Paula Hospital and the broader Santa Clara Valley health and social-service system.

We Need a Bridge to the Future—Not a Gap in Care

Our community cannot afford to lose essential healthcare services while waiting for a future project that may take years to plan, finance, approve, design, permit, construct, staff, and bring into operation.

There must be **no gap in hospital, emergency, clinic, behavioral-health, public-health, or social services** as the County develops and constructs any proposed new health and social-service complex, new hospital, or senior assisted-living facility.

A future capital improvement project cannot substitute for the healthcare our residents need today.

That is why **retrofitting and modernizing the existing Santa Paula Hospital must be pursued as an immediate investment and bridge to the future.**

Retrofitting is not the end-all solution. Nor should it be presented as an alternative that eliminates the need for continued investment in the future.

Instead, the County should pursue both objectives simultaneously:

Protect and modernize the healthcare capacity we have today while building the healthcare infrastructure our community will need tomorrow.

Retrofitting the existing hospital does not eliminate the County's responsibility to continue planning, financing, and investing in the promised future Santa Clara Valley health and social-service complex, including a potential new hospital, clinics, behavioral-health services, public-health programs, social services, senior services, workforce development, and other healthcare infrastructure.

Indeed, responsible planning requires the County to maintain existing capacity while developing the next generation of healthcare infrastructure.

The County must therefore establish a **continuity-of-care and transition plan** before making any decision that could reduce or eliminate existing hospital services. That plan should identify how hospital, emergency, clinic, behavioral-health, public-health, and social services will remain available throughout the entire period of planning, financing, permitting, construction, staffing, and activation of any future facility.

The residents of Santa Paula, Fillmore, and Piru should not be asked to sacrifice current access to healthcare based on the promise of a future facility.

We need a bridge to the future—not a gap in care.

Accountability Must Accompany Major Healthcare Decisions

Given the approaching 2030 deadline, leadership turnover, compliance concerns, and the County's ongoing healthcare challenges, the public deserves more than assurances that future projects will eventually address today's problems.

The Board should require a publicly accessible implementation plan that identifies:

1. **The immediate steps required to preserve and modernize Santa Paula Hospital;**
2. **The timeline for meeting the 2030 retrofitting requirements;**
3. **The projected cost of retrofitting and maintaining the existing hospital;**
4. **The funding sources available and proposed for those improvements;**

5. **The timeline, funding strategy, and milestones for any future hospital or health and social-service complex;**
6. **The responsible County officials and departments for each major milestone;**
7. **Public reporting requirements so residents can monitor progress;**
8. **A continuity-of-services plan that prevents gaps in hospital and healthcare access; and**
9. **Measurable benchmarks by which the Board and the public can determine whether the County is fulfilling its commitments.**

Major public healthcare decisions should not depend solely on changing leadership, shifting priorities, or future promises.

The people of Santa Paula, Fillmore, and Piru deserve a transparent process with clear commitments that survive changes in personnel and administration.

The County Must Pursue Both the Present and the Future

We support responsible long-term planning for a modern Santa Clara Valley healthcare and social-service system.

But long-term planning cannot come at the expense of present-day healthcare.

The County must pursue both objectives simultaneously:

- 1. Preserve, retrofit, modernize, and maintain the existing Santa Paula Hospital now; and**
- 2. Continue planning, financing, and developing the future healthcare and social-service infrastructure our communities need.**

One cannot be used as an excuse to abandon the other.

The existing hospital is the bridge that protects our community while the County determines what the next generation of healthcare infrastructure should look like.

The future project is not a substitute for that bridge.

And the bridge must not become an excuse to abandon the future.

Our community needs both.

Once hospital infrastructure, services, healthcare professionals, institutional knowledge, and operational capacity are lost, rebuilding them may take years—or may never occur.

That is why the decisions before the Board are not simply about what may appear financially convenient today.

They are about whether Ventura County will protect healthcare access for the people who depend upon it today while responsibly building the healthcare system they will need tomorrow.

We need a bridge to the future—not a gap in care.

The County's Responsibility Is to the Entire County

The Ventura County Board of Supervisors has stated that its mission is to provide public service, to help residents improve their quality of life while enjoying the benefits of a healthy and vibrant community.

That commitment must apply to **every community—not only the communities with the greatest wealth or political influence.**

Santa Paula is part of Ventura County.

Fillmore and Piru are part of Ventura County.

The Santa Clara Valley is part of Ventura County.

Our residents deserve the same commitment to health, safety, opportunity, and public investment as residents anywhere else in this County.

We Ask the Board of Supervisors to Act

Santa Paula Latino Town Hall respectfully requests that the Ventura County Board of Supervisors:

- 1. Commit to preserving meaningful hospital-level care in Santa Paula.**
- 2. Direct the Health Care Agency to fully evaluate retrofitting and modernizing the existing Santa Paula Hospital as an immediate and viable investment in maintaining hospital-level care.**
- 3. Reject any proposal that would leave Santa Paula, Fillmore, and Piru with substantially diminished access to hospital-level care.**
- 4. Require a complete, independent, and publicly accessible financial analysis** of all proposed hospital alternatives, including the cost of retrofitting and modernizing the existing facility.
- 5. Require a meaningful community engagement process** in which residents of Santa Paula, Fillmore, and the surrounding Santa Clara Valley have a substantive role in determining the future of healthcare in their community.

6. Evaluate the health-equity and racial-equity consequences of every proposed hospital alternative, including its effect on Latino residents, Medi-Cal beneficiaries, seniors, children, people with disabilities, working families, and residents who lack reliable transportation.

7. Explore partnerships with local educational institutions, healthcare providers, workforce-development organizations, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and potential public-private partners to create a sustainable long-term healthcare model.

8. Retrofit, modernize, and maintain the existing Santa Paula Hospital while the County plans, finances, and develops the promised Santa Clara Valley health and social-service capital improvement projects. Retrofitting should be treated as a necessary investment in the community and a bridge to the future—not as an end-all solution and not as a substitute for future investment in a new hospital, clinics, behavioral-health services, public-health programs, social services, senior services, and other healthcare infrastructure.

9. Develop and publicly present a comprehensive continuity-of-services plan demonstrating how the County will prevent gaps or substantial reductions in hospital, emergency, clinic, behavioral-health, public-health, and social services while any future health and social-service complex, new hospital, or senior assisted-living facility is being planned, financed, constructed, and brought into operation.

10. Develop a long-term Santa Clara Valley Healthcare and Economic Development Strategy that recognizes the hospital and related healthcare and social-service infrastructure as essential components of the region's economic and community infrastructure.

This Is About Whether Every Life Has Equal Value

We recognize that the County faces difficult financial and operational challenges.

But financial challenges cannot become a justification for perpetuating healthcare inequity.

A community should not have to be wealthy to deserve a hospital.

A family should not have to drive farther because of where they live.

A Latino community should not have to accept less because it has historically received less.

And no resident should have to wonder whether the quality of healthcare available to them is determined by their ZIP code, income, race, or political influence.

Enough is enough.

Santa Paula Latino Town Hall is asking the Board of Supervisors to make a clear commitment:

End racial inequity in health care.

Invest in the Santa Clara Valley.

Preserve hospital-level care in Santa Paula.

Retrofit and modernize our existing hospital now.

Continue planning and investing in the future hospital and health and social-service complex.

Protect continuity of care so our community is not left without essential services during the transition.

Give our community the healthcare it deserves.

Once hospital infrastructure, services, healthcare professionals, and institutional capacity are lost, rebuilding them may take years or may never occur.

The decision before you is therefore not merely about what is financially convenient today.

It is about what kind of Ventura County we want to build for the next generation.

We respectfully ask each member of the Board of Supervisors to stand with Santa Paula, Fillmore, Piru, and demonstrate through action—not simply words—that **every resident of Ventura County deserves equitable access to quality healthcare.**

We do not want a glorified urgent care center.

We deserve a hospital that will serve our community properly.

We look forward to your prompt response and to working with the Board, the Health Care Agency, and community partners toward a solution that protects the health, dignity, and future of our residents.

In service to our community,

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