

April 22, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Skinner
California State Senate
1020 N Street, Room 502
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Senator Skinner & Members of the Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee:

I am writing to you today to offer my full support for Kaweah Health's request for \$3.5 million in one-time funds to acquire and renovate a hotel in Visalia so that it may be dedicated to providing housing for visiting medical students, physician residents, and other learners.

Tulare County is one of the most medically underserved counties in California. A 2020 study by consulting firm Sg2 determined that the county had 178 less physicians than its population and demographics indicated was needed to adequately care for the community.

Kaweah Health is the largest healthcare provider in Tulare County, and aggressively recruits new physicians to the community every year. In 2016, Kaweah Health became a teaching institution and they currently train 130 physician residents in six specialties, including family medicine, psychiatry, general surgery, emergency medicine, anesthesia, and transitional year. This year, they started a child and adolescent psychiatry fellowship. One of the primary objectives for these physician training programs is the recruitment of new physicians to the community.

To help ensure that the Kaweah Health residency programs attract the highest quality residents, Kaweah Health has entered into partnerships with the University of Southern California, UC Davis, and other medical schools that enable medical students to rotate at Kaweah Health during their third and fourth years of medical school. The hope is that these medical students will then apply to the Kaweah Health residency programs. To increase this likelihood, and to provide these visiting students with a safe and enjoyable experience, Kaweah Health is seeking to develop dedicated housing for these students. Currently, students struggle to find short-term rentals or stay in hotels during their 4 to 6 week rotations. This has been increasingly challenging due to a tight real estate market in the Visalia area.

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The development of a dedicated facility would provide the students with safe housing just a block from the Kaweah Health campus. The facility would provide private bedrooms and bathrooms, as well as common spaces for the students to study, eat, work out, and do laundry. The property being planned is located on Visalia's vibrant Main Street, which offers the students exciting dining and shopping opportunities to enhance their experience in our community.

The development of this residential facility for visiting medical students would be a major benefit to Kaweah Health, helping them attract high quality medical students. It would also be a huge benefit to the students themselves, who would have a safe and convenient place to stay. And finally, this project would greatly benefit our community- initially as a result of the financial impact to our downtown, but longer term in the form of additional physicians who enjoyed their time at Kaweah Health and in Visalia and decided to return here to practice medicine. For these reasons, I strongly encourage you to consider Kaweah Health's request for funding this project.

Thank you for your consideration and support of this important project.

Sincerely,

(Insert Signature Block)

Cc: Senator Shannon Grove