

RESOLUTION 2023.5

A Resolution of the Democratic Party of Lane County

Relating to the closure of Eugene's PeaceHealth hospital

WHEREAS, PeaceHealth is planning to abandon Eugene, leaving Oregon's second largest city without a hospital or an emergency room; and

WHEREAS, PeaceHealth has a nearly \$8 billion bank account. It has the means to care for our community. It is choosing to put profits over people; and

WHEREAS, PeaceHealth recently made significant investments to the University District Emergency Department (UD ED) so it could accommodate community members experiencing mental health crises in the most compassionate and effective way possible. Now those rooms will be closed and that care will be shut down. Riverbend does not have similar support for people experiencing mental health crises. Oregon is severely lacking in mental and behavioral health care capacity and improving that capacity is a major emphasis for the Oregon Health Authority and Governor Tina Kotek; and

WHEREAS, by moving all health care across the river to Springfield, a predictable emergency—like a major earthquake—will cut off the majority of Eugene residents from the hospital, significantly delaying care during emergencies and dramatically increasing the likelihood of local deaths; and

WHEREAS, PeaceHealth's emergency department at RiverBend is already on the verge of collapse and can't absorb the additional patients that will result from this closure; and

WHEREAS, All Lane County's emergency medical service (EMS) providers will have to spend excessive hours delivering patients to Springfield—where they will get stuck waiting to offload patients in the overrun Riverbend ED—instead of being in the community ready for the next emergency; and

WHEREAS, PeaceHealth chose to make the University District hospital a money loser. They purposefully moved all profitable services to Riverbend over the last

few years. Now, local EMS transport the most critical patients to Riverbend because of PeaceHealth's lack of support at University District. PeaceHealth executives chose to run University District under capacity. They chose to cap the medical unit at UD, which is designed to serve our elderly members of the community, at 10 patients at a time since May 2022. The unit can serve up to 44 patients at a time; and

WHEREAS, PeaceHealth said in its 2022-2025 [Community Health Needs Assessment](#), *"PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Medical Center, University District serves the community with ... much-needed behavioral health services and a highly utilized level 3 emergency department. Outpatient services focus on innovative behavioral health programs and youth services, and the emergency department aligns with community services like Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets (CAHOOTS) and ShelterCare to maximize support to unhoused patients"*. PeaceHealth recognized the importance of its services to our community very recently, but now seems to want to abandon the most vulnerable in our community; and

WHEREAS, the highest priority legislative action item (LAI) of the Democratic Party of Oregon from its 2023 platform convention is *"Introduce legislation to establish a single-payer healthcare system, ensuring access to comprehensive care, including reproductive, mental health, gender affirming, and preventive services, including abortion, without financial barriers. Allocate funding to expand access to medications, vision, dental, hearing, reproductive, surgical, and behavioral and mental health services within the single-payer healthcare system"*; and

WHEREAS, with a reasonably designed single payer system, individual hospitals would be paid with a global budget, with separate operational and capital budgets. Closures and new facility siting would be decided by the community, not corporate executives. The operational budget would support necessary services, instead of relying on profitable services to support those less so. Reimbursement schedules would tend not to create more or less profitable services; and

WHEREAS, SB 1089, championed by Sen. James Manning and Rep. Travis Nelson and passed by Democrats in the 2023 session, will create a Governance Board to design a universal system that should be able to avoid problems such as the closure of PeaceHealth's Eugene hospital. Such a system would not only be more equitable, it would cost less due to administrative efficiencies, bulk pharmaceutical purchasing, and simpler and more effective methods to prevent fraud.

THEREFORE, the Democratic Party of Lane County resolves:

SECTION 1: To call upon PeaceHealth, the Oregon Health Authority and Governor Kotek to reverse the disastrous decision to close PeaceHealth University District and save lives by keeping Eugene's only hospital open; and

SECTION 2. To encourage Lane County Democrats to do what they can to keep Eugene's hospital open; and

SECTION 3. To remind elected Democrats of the DPO's highest priority LAI (single payer health care) when necessary; and

SECTION 4. To encourage Gov. Kotek to appoint, in a timely manner, strong members to the Universal Health Plan Governance Board established by SB 1089, and to ensure that those members support the objectives, principles and values outlined in the bill, as required by the bill language.