

July 6, 2021

Supervisor Chris Coursey  
Board of Supervisors  
575 Administration Drive  
Room 100 A  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Re: American Rescue Plan Act

Dear Supervisor Coursey:

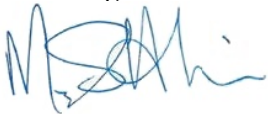
As Sonoma County emerges from the daunting 14-month COVID battle, the news of \$130+ million in American Rescue Plan Act funding to Sonoma and Santa Rosa is most welcome. For a county hit by wildfires, a significant COVID surge earlier this year, caring for unhoused community members as well as those with significant behavioral health challenges, all under the looming threat of drought; the need for relief funding has never been greater.

Through all the challenges Sonoma County has faced, our hospitals have stepped up and been there to provide care and support—above and beyond their responsibilities. With emergency departments often equally divided between caring for patients in psychiatric crisis and those with COVID symptoms, the acute needs of Sonoma County residents were both felt and met within our hospitals. Our steadfast reliance on hospitals has overextended their staff to the point of burnout, early retirements, and extreme fatigue. Significant financial costs to hospitals continue to add up in lost revenue and added expenses. An April [report](#) from Kaufman Hall shows California hospitals lost \$14 billion dollars due to the pandemic and could lose up to an additional \$2 billion this year. Sutter Health alone booked an operating loss of [\\$321 million](#) in 2020.

As Sonoma County develops a plan for the best use of the ARPA funds, we hope you will keep our community's health care needs in focus. The pandemic has only increased the already significant needs, some dramatically, and most notably behavioral health issues, especially among youth. Our hospitals stridently supported Measure O to help decant individuals to appropriate care settings, the Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF) has not opened yet, and the oversight committee has not confirmed any hospital representation. Hospitals funded additional time off and employee support during COVID (on top of already generous benefits packages) and the county mandate for additional paid leave increased the financial impact even more.

The ARPA was [designed](#) to support public health expenditures, fund premium pay for essential workers, and address negative economic impacts caused by the public health emergency. We hope you will agree that Sonoma County's hospitals fall within those criteria. It is our hope that you will include hospital leadership in your conversations around how to maximize the Sonoma County public health uses of these federal relief funds. We are grateful for the communication with Sonoma County and look forward to collectively maintaining our Sonoma Strong.

Sincerely,



Meghan Hardin, FACHE  
Regional Vice President, North Bay