



RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES
OF CALIFORNIA

March 14, 2023

The Honorable Jim Wood
Chair, Assembly Committee on Health
1020 N Street, Room 390
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Assembly Bill 869 (Wood) – SUPPORT
As Amended March 7, 2023**

Dear Assemblymember Wood:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), we support your Assembly Bill 869. AB 869 would require Health Care Access and Administration (HCAI), upon appropriation by the Legislature, to provide grants to financially distressed small rural and district hospitals to pay for 2030 seismic upgrades and delay the requirement to 2035. RCRC is an association of forty rural California counties, and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from each of those member counties.

Hospitals must comply with seismic safety standards, including a requirement that buildings posing a significant risk of collapse and a danger to the public — referred to as Structural Performance Category (SPC) 1 buildings — be rebuilt or retrofitted to be capable of withstanding an earthquake or removed from acute care service and hospital must also be capable of continued operation by January 1, 2030. There are very few remaining buildings at risk of collapse in an earthquake. Based on the 2030 requirement to remain operational, 75% of hospital buildings are already 2030 compliant with the more expensive SPC requirements; however, the remaining hospitals, which are spread across more than 250 hospital campuses, must be taken out of service by 2030 or rebuilt to the SPC 4D standard. Many rural hospitals are at risk of not being able to comply with these requirements by 2030 due to the costs associated with upgrades.

At this point in time, over half of California's 337 hospitals¹ are operating at a financial loss. Of the 55 rural hospitals in California, 16 (29%)² are at risk of closing. Without grant funding for seismic improvements, we risk additional hospital closures in rural communities. AB 869 is a much-needed lifeline for financially distressed rural

¹ <https://calmatters.org/health/2023/01/hospital-closure/>

² [Center for Healthcare Quality and Payment Reform – Rural Hospitals at Risk of Closing Report](#)

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hospitals to ensure they have the funding needed to meet requirements and flexible compliance timelines if funds are unavailable.

AB 869 is essential to preserving healthcare facilities in rural California. For these reasons, RCRC is pleased to support AB 869. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (916) 447-4806 or sdukett@rcrcnet.org.

Sincerely,



SARAH DUKETT
Policy Advocate

cc: Members of the Assembly Committee on Health
Rosielyn Pulmano, Consultant, Assembly Committee on Health
Gino Folchi, Consultant, Assembly Republican Committee