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2ND DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

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January 27, 2016

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0502

Melissa Stafford Jones, Regional Director
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
90 Seventh Street Federal Building, Suite 5-100
San Francisco, CA 94103

Dear Director:

We are writing to request your assistance with expediting the processing of Sonoma West Medical Center's Medicare Provider Transaction Access Number (PTAN) by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).

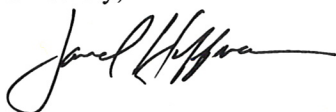
As you may know, Sonoma West Medical Center is a newly-reopened, community-owned hospital located in Sebastopol, and 50% of patients it serves are Medicare beneficiaries. For your background, the 2014 closure of the hospital and the significant reduction in beds at the Sutter Hospital in Santa Rosa which followed created a serious shortage of acute care beds and emergency services for many residents in Sonoma County. In response, the community engaged in extraordinary efforts to reopen the hospital, which occurred at the end of October 2015. By December, the hospital was accredited, and by mid-January, over 3,000 patients were receiving services from the hospital. The delay in payments from Medicare to the hospital, however, is putting the success of this valuable community endeavor at risk.

We understand that once the San Francisco Regional Office approves the certification kit, Sonoma West can bill retroactively to the date of the successfully completed survey. Since the hospital cannot submit a bill for payment until your office approves the hospital for Medicare billing and CMS' contractor Noridian enters the hospital to the database of eligible hospitals to bill Medicare, urgency is a high priority. Waiting up to 45 days for approval from your office, and an additional 21 days for Noridian, is just too long. According to Sonoma West Medical Center leadership, the delay in payment while that approval is pending is jeopardizing the future of the hospital, as the community needs to raise almost \$2 million a month to cover the cost of operations until reimbursement is received.

We appreciate the responsiveness of your staff in working with mine (ours) and ask for your swift attention to assuring the Survey and Certification Team reviews the certification kit as expeditiously as possible, and that you and your team relay the same sense of urgency to Noridian.

We will remain fully engaged on this issue until this matter is resolved. Thank you for your prompt attention.

Sincerely,



JARED HUFFMAN
Member of Congress



MIKE THOMPSON
Member of Congress

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