

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

SUPERVISORS

Phillip Peters District 1
Zack Scrivner District 2
Jeff Flores District 3
David Couch District 4
Leticia Perez District 5



KATHLEEN KRAUSE
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
Kern County Administrative Center
1115 Truxtun Avenue, 5th Floor
Bakersfield, CA 93301
Telephone (661) 868-3585
TTY Relay (800) 735-2929

April 25, 2024

The Honorable Buffy Wicks
Chair, Assembly Appropriations Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 8220
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 2357 (Bains), University of California San Joaquin Valley Regional Campus Medical Education Endowment Fund – SUPPORT

Dear Assembly Member Wicks,

I am writing on behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors to express our strong support for AB 2357 (Bains), which would lay the foundation for the creation of a University of California (UC) medical school in Kern County through the creation of an endowment fund.

At the direction of the Legislature, the UC released a report on improving access to health care in the San Joaquin Valley. The UC report notes that the two strongest predictors of where physicians will practice are (a) where the physician finishes their residency training and (b) where the individual was raised. The report cites studies showing that medical students are far more likely to practice in communities similar to where they were raised. The presence of a medical school in a geographic area substantially increases the opportunities for residency training, while also providing an opportunity to recruit medical students who were raised and educated in the area. Creating a medical school in Kern County will allow us to “grow our own” by recruiting local medical students, expanding local residency programs, and offering new doctors the opportunity to practice medicine close to home.

The need to recruit more doctors to the San Joaquin Valley cannot be understated. The eight Valley counties – Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tulare suffer from some of the poorest air quality and highest rates of poverty and uninsured in the nation. Of the more than 4 million people who call the Valley home, 41% are covered by Medi-Cal, and Valley counties rank at the bottom for health outcomes compared to other parts of California. Among the state's 58 counties, Fresno, Kern, Madera, and Tulare rank 52nd, 53rd, 49th, and 50th respectively for health outcomes.

The County of Kern has a long history of promoting medical education within the county through its collaboration with Kern Medical Center, which has provided graduate medical education for more than 67 years and has provided clinical rotations for thousands of medical students. Despite these efforts, the Valley has a long-standing shortage of physicians and other healthcare professionals. It

has the lowest ratio of licensed MDs, DOs, NPs, RNs, marriage and family therapists, counselors, and social workers in the state. The Valley has just 157 MDs per 100,000 people; the Bay Area has 411, while the state average is 237. The Valley has fewer than 45 primary care physicians per 100,000 people while the average in California is 156.

The Valley needs more than 4,000 additional physicians to meet the healthcare needs of our growing population. While AB 2357 represents the first legislation proposing the creation of a medical school endowment in the South Valley, the Governor's support to expand medical education at UC Merced/UCSF-Fresno has been instrumental in improving health care in the North Valley. With more than 150 miles separating UC Merced and Kern County, the South Valley is equally deserving of a medical school to help address our healthcare workforce shortage. Working together, the North and South Valley can begin to erode the inequities of a decades-long doctor shortage that has contributed to the poor health outcomes of our residents.

For these reasons, the Kern County Board of Supervisors strongly supports this legislation and respectfully requests that you vote **YES on AB 2357**.

Sincerely,



David Couch, Chairman
Kern County Board of Supervisors

cc: Honorable Members, Assembly Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Gavin Newsom, Governor
The Honorable Robert Rivas, Speaker of the Assembly
The Honorable Mike McGuire, Senate President pro Tempore
Honorable Members, Kern Legislative Delegation
Kern Medical
Shaw Yoder Antwih Schmelzer & Lange