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March 31, 2025

The Honorable Alex Padilla
U.S. Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Padilla,

I am writing on behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors to express our strong support for Kern County Hospital Authority (Kern Medical) in their congressional spending proposal to support the growth and expansion of its Surgical Residency Program. We recognize the critical importance of training and retaining highly skilled physicians and surgeons to meet the healthcare needs of our community, particularly in the face of the ongoing physician shortage that severely impacts our ability to deliver timely, quality care.

Our community, like many in rural and medically underserved areas, faces significant challenges in accessing specialized care. Kern County, in particular, is experiencing a persistent shortage of trained surgeons and specialized medical professionals. The expansion of Kern Medical's Surgical Residency Program presents an important opportunity to address this issue by training the next generation of surgeons who will serve our community's needs for decades to come.

By investing in this program, we can help ensure that local medical professionals are well-equipped to provide expert care in various surgical specialties. Additionally, the residency program offers an invaluable opportunity for new doctors to develop the specialized skills necessary to address the most complex medical conditions. More importantly, this initiative will help us retain highly qualified physicians who are committed to serving in our community, reducing the need to rely on out-of-area specialists.

Kern Medical's Surgical Residency Program plays a pivotal role in developing our local healthcare workforce. It not only provides a hands-on learning environment for resident physicians but also ensures that our community has access to specialized care that is often in short supply in underserved areas. These residents, many of whom are likely to stay and practice in the region upon completion of their training, will significantly contribute to the long-term health and well-being of our population.

Furthermore, expanding this program will improve health outcomes, support the economic vitality of our region, and help alleviate the strain placed on local hospitals and healthcare systems by

physician shortages. In particular, the continued growth and success of the residency program is essential in ensuring the availability of skilled surgeons and other medical professionals who can meet the complex healthcare needs of our community.

The County of Kern strongly urges you to support Kern Medical's funding request and help ensure the growth and sustainability of this essential program. The impact of this investment will be felt for generations as it directly contributes to the training, recruitment, and retention of highly qualified healthcare providers in our community.

Thank you for your attention to this critical request. If you need additional information or would like to discuss the importance of this program further, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'LP' with a stylized flourish.

Leticia Perez, Chair
Kern County Board of Supervisors