



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **SUPERVISOR RIDLEY-THOMAS, COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS URGE UC REGENTS TO MOVE FORWARD WITH AGREEMENT TO PROVIDE PHYSICIAN SERVICES AT NEW MLK HOSPITAL**

#### ***County proposes \$100 million letter of credit to seal partnership deal***

**SAN FRANCISCO** – Testifying before the University of California Board of Regents, Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas and a cross section of stakeholders today urged the Regents to consummate a deal with the County of Los Angeles to provide physician services for the new Martin Luther King, Jr. Hospital.

The speakers reassured the Regents – who could vote on the deal as soon as November – that the County will be responsible for the funding of the hospital, not the UC.

To allay UC Regents' concerns, County officials unveiled another layer of protection for the UC – a \$100 million letter of credit that the UC can draw on if there are funding shortfalls.

“Our message is simple, we’re ready to partner with you,” Supervisor Ridley-Thomas told the Regents.

Also urging the board to vote for the deal were a dozen stakeholders representing community, business, labor groups and healthcare advocates.

“We have laid a financial structure that will ensure the viability of this facility, Los Angeles County Chief Executive Officer William T Bill Fujioka told the Regents.

The Board of Supervisors have committed \$354 million for capital projects at the MLK Hospital site, which was closed to inpatient services in 2007, plus \$63 million annually to cover operating expenses.

Dr. Keith Norris, Interim President of the Charles Drew University of Medicine and Science, said the hospital will provide care for patients who now have to travel “miles from home” for medical care.

Gary Toebben, President of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, told the Regents that the hospital has been the Chamber’s top health care priority since the old hospital closed.

Assembly Speaker Karen Bass, who is also a Regent, told her colleagues that “people have lost their lives because of the absence of the hospital.”

“I would like to offer my time to make sure that when we come back in November, we will vote on this matter,” Bass said.

UC President Mark Yudof told the backers of the new hospital “I know that you’re on a mission, but it’s a good mission. I am confident that we can work through the issues and I look forward to November.”

Among others who testified at the meeting were Lark Galloway-Gilliam of the Community Health Councils; Rev. Norman Johnson, representing the Los Angeles Ecumenical Congress; Barbara Segal of Neighborhood Legal Services; and Veronica Melvin, Executive Director of the Alliance for a Better Community.

Under the proposal, negotiated over the past several months, the County and the UC would create a nonprofit entity, with the university providing physician services and medical oversight for the 120-bed hospital, scheduled to open in 2012.

Support for the project has been building for weeks in the County. On Aug. 1, hundreds of stakeholders attended a town hall meeting hosted by the Supervisor.

On Aug. 18, an overflow audience of 700-plus residents and stakeholders filled the Supervisors' hearing room as the Board, voting on a motion by Ridley-Thomas, unanimously approved a plan to build the new hospital.

The Board also approved a capital program for construction of the new medical facilities – contingent on the UC Regents voting to enter into the service agreement with the County.

Following today's meeting, Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said "the County's letter of credit sends a very clear message to the Regents that Los Angeles County is very serious about making this deal happen and fulfilling its mission to provide quality patient care."

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