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Ensuring Life-Saving Services throughout L.A. County

With the pending sale of St. Francis Medical Center in Lynwood, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors is now looking into a backup plan and potential funding options to ensure life-saving services continue in the Southeast Los Angeles area and that adequate trauma care continues countywide.

On Tuesday, the Board asked the Department of Health Services to look into what resources it could use, including funds from Measure B, to fill the need if St. Francis' trauma center is shuttered. Measure B, a special parcel tax passed by voters in 2002, created a fund to preserve a county-wide system of trauma centers, emergency medical services and bioterrorism responses.

The Attorney General, Kamala Harris, is currently reviewing the sale of six Daughters of Charity Health System hospitals including St. Francis.

“Regardless of the Attorney General’s action, it is critical that the County continue to explore all alternatives to ensure there is not a disruption in life-saving services,” said Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, who authored the motion.

The Attorney General and Los Angeles County’s Department of Health Services have both released reports confirming the crucial role St. Francis Medical Center plays as one of the busiest trauma centers in the county. In addition, a related January report by the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services found that the new private non-profit MLK Community Hospital -- set to open later this year – could not fill any trauma care service delivery gap without a significant service expansion and financial investment for additional hospital staff and infrastructure, including the construction of new inpatient beds and operating rooms. Even then, it would take years to meet state certification and licensing requirements.

“At a minimum, we need to maintain the level of services that St. Francis provides the community,” said Supervisor Ridley-Thomas. “We will look at every available option to ensure that the community is protected.”

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