

Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce **BOARD POSITION**

*Action: APPROVED
Date: August 25, 2016*

Chamber Supports Continuation of Bernalillo County Mill Levy to Benefit UNM Hospitals

Position

The Board of Directors of the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce supports continuation of a mill levy of 6.4 mils for operational and maintenance funds for UNM Hospital. The UNM Hospital mill levy has been in existence since 1954; it must be voted on by Bernalillo County voters every eight years. Property owners would not see a tax increase as a result of the mill levy continuation. The issue will be on the November 2016 general election ballot.

The Chamber Board recognizes the invaluable contributions of UNM Hospitals and urges Bernalillo County voters to again approve its continuation. The mill levy generates approximately \$95 million of funding to the hospitals each year and is necessary for UNMH to continue providing specialized resources and to operate programs. Medicaid, Medicare and commercial insurance payments do not fully support the programs and services provided by the Hospitals.

In 2015, mill levy funding accounted for about 9% of UNMH revenues, providing more than \$93 million in resources for UNMH specialty programs. Behavioral, pediatric and surgery specialty programs were among the top recipients of mill levy funding.

UNM Hospital operates the state's only Level One Trauma Center, which treats nearly 90,000 emergency patients and more than 450,000 outpatients annually, the Comprehensive Cancer Center, the Children's Hospital, the Stroke Center, the Burn Center and many other programs. UNM Hospital also serves as the primary teaching hospital for the UNM School of Medicine and participates in hundreds of advanced clinical trials annually.

Position Paper



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New Mexico's uninsured population has declined in recent years as a result of the expansion of Medicaid, but the state continues to have high percentages of under- and uninsured residents. UNM Hospital serves Bernalillo County as an essential provider of care to all county residents, including the state's most vulnerable indigent population. It is open to all patients in all circumstances.

The Chamber urges voters to approve the continuation of the mill levy to support UNMH.

Background

The Chamber has long supported Bernalillo County's mill levy to support the programs and operation of UNM Hospitals. UNMH, which serves the community as a public teaching hospital, began originally in 1954 as a joint venture between the United States Government and Bernalillo County to treat Native American patients and uninsured patients in Bernalillo County. Called Bernalillo County Medical Center (BCMC), the Hospital became affiliated with the University of New Mexico School of Medicine with the development of teaching programs for medical student and house officers. The faculty of the UNM School of Medicine became the medical staff for the Hospital though the Hospital was still managed by Bernalillo County.

Programs and affiliation between the Medical School and the Hospital grew and in 1978 the University of New Mexico leased the Hospital from Bernalillo County so that the University could manage the nurses and technical staff of the Hospital. The Hospital developed teaching programs that attracted a more diverse patient population, which increased revenues, and programs.

Lease of the Hospital by the University required special legislative approval acquired through passage of the Hospital Funding Act of 1978, which defined the relationship of the County, the State and the University. The statute allowed for a mil levy of 4.5 mils to be placed on a ballot every eight years in Bernalillo County. The statute specified that all funds generated by the mil levy would go to the University for operations and support of the Hospital. The statute was amended in 1986 to allow the mil levy to increase to a maximum of 6.5 mils. At that time, the addition of two mills for the Hospital was passed by a large margin.