

Public Comments

The [Health Care Market Oversight](#) (HCMO) program reviews proposed health care business deals to make sure they support Oregon's goals of health equity, lower costs, increased access, and better care. This document presents public comments related to the HCMO review of 079 Salem Health – Santiam. Public comments were received via email to hcmo.info@oha.oregon.gov, voicemail, or by filling out the [Public Comment Form](#). Comments are presented below in the order received and may include typos or misspellings. Personal contact information for individuals has been removed.

OHA expresses no views on the substance of these comments, and their publication does not constitute an endorsement by OHA of the views expressed.

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1. 4/16/2026

I don't believe this should be allowed - Salem Health has been eating up all the clinics in the area and is becoming a monopoly. Further, they are not currently operating at a level that accounts for the population in the area. They have insufficient staff and insufficient equipment (CT Scans, MRI, PET, etc.) to meet the needs of the population they currently serve. As they take over other clinics, they have removed equipment in those clinics meaning less equipment is available. Their plans are to centralize everyone and while that may be a good business decision, it does not meet the needs of the people in Marion and Polk counties. They are delaying treatment because of these business decisions and patients have suffered because of it. Residents of Marion and Polk counties should have more options to choose from and not be limited to Salem Health.

Connie Rush

2. 4/17/26

I receive my care at Salem Health , and I wanted to share why the partnership between Salem Health and Santiam matters to me. In my experience, both organizations have played an important role in supporting the health of our community. The idea of them working together feels like a meaningful step toward strengthening local access to care.

From my perspective as a patient, collaboration between health systems can create more stability, expand services, and help ensure that high-quality care remains available close to home. I value the teams who have cared for me, and I appreciate efforts that help them continue providing excellent service.

Thank you for considering my comments as part of the public review process.

Mindy Hutchison

3. 4/17/2026

My family and I have received care at both Salem Health and Santiam. I grew up in Stayton and since moving back in 2021 to raise our family, we have had 3 ER visits at Santiam with excellent care. In that same timeframe, I have had two emergency c-sections at Salem Health. I truly believe my family is here today due to the care we received at both organizations. I believe that this partnership will allow Stayton residents to continue receiving excellent care and open the doors to easier access to care in Salem and additional services.

Sarah Gonzalez

4. 4/17/2026

I personally receive care at Salem Hospital, West Valley Hospital as well as a Salem Health Clinic and I always receive great care at all of the locations. I am writing to express my full support for the proposed partnership between Santiam Hospital and Salem Health.

This collaboration represents an important step forward in ensuring that residents of the Santiam Canyon and the Mid-Willamette Valley continue to have access to high-quality, local healthcare.

Salem Health has already demonstrated a deep commitment to rural healthcare through its investment in West Valley Hospital. That partnership allowed for expanded

bed capacity from 6 to 25, increased staffing (more jobs), and brought in new specialty services—including wound care, infusion, and orthopedic rehabilitation—directly to the Dallas community. I think that this shows that something like that can also be achieved at Santiam.

Independent health systems like Santiam face significant headwinds, including but not limited to financial pressure due to federal funding reductions (Medicaid). By joining forces, Santiam can leverage the resources of a larger system to stabilize its operations and ensure that local governance and community values remain at the heart of healthcare delivery.

Salem Health has already proven to be a steady, reliable partner that prioritizes local care delivery. I believe this partnership will create a more stable, robust healthcare system that is better equipped to serve the people of Marion and Linn counties for decades to come.

Cynthia E.

5. 4/20/2026

Salem Health has become a monopoly here. This should not be approved until they have a contract with all insurance companies and agree to arbitration if they have issues again and no ability to drop any insurance coverage since they are a monopoly

Susan Brewer

6. 4/21/2026

I would like to ask for this merger not to happen. Very few clinics accept blue cross blue shield enough as it is. Having a hospital close by for emergency and ease of scheduling has been a big help .

Sarah Ramseth

7. 4/21/2026

Since Salem Health has declined to take BC&BS Santiam hospital is one of my only options for care. If this merger goes through I'll be forced to seek care many miles from my home. I don't like this merger for this reason.

Matthew Harding

8. 4/21/2026

My family is insured by Regence Blue Cross through my spouses employer. As a person with ongoing medical concerns and the need for specialists and Healthcare to meet these medical needs, my options for said Healthcare are greatly diminished by Salem Health monopolizing the medical "industry." MY family and I, let alone a lot of people we know, cannot use ANY facility owned by Salem Health. As they have "bought up" everything in the valley, it has limited options for close Healthcare that is necessary. I had an emergency and attempted to seek help at the ER in Salem (being the closest as a Keizer resident) and I was turned away because I have Regence. As it was an emergency, I offered to pay cash out of pocket and was told, loudly and rudely, "if the patient has Regence we DON'T and WON'T see them even on a cash out of pocket basis." For all hospital or ER needs my family has, we have to account for at least 30 minutes of travel time, for any surgeries or procedures for my ongoing health needs I have to hope my doctor participates in surgical centers that are not part of Salem Health. Specialists are few and far now. The idea of Salem Health "buying" another Healthcare facility makes me sick.

Kristie Powell-Robert

9. 4/22/2026

I am a retired pharmacist. Decades ago, while I was still practicing, I noticed that Salem Hospital (Salem Health) was accumulating control of various medical practices. I was concerned at the time that, if this continued, a monopoly could develop and could result in problems associated with such situations. It is my understanding that Polk Community Hospital (Dallas Hospital) is already associated with Salem Health. Adding Santiam Hospital to the Salem Health entity would eliminate what little competition remains for Salem Health. It would eliminate not only competition but eliminate alternative health care options, as well. Silverton Hospital would be one of the last remaining satellite health care facilities...and you can bet Salem Health is likely eyeing it as a potential acquisition, as well. When Salem Health declines to participate in an insurance plan....like they did recently with Blue Cross, there needs to be other local hospitals available which might choose to participate in the insurance plan and give patients the ability to use an "in-network" hospital with the lower costs associated with that status. Patient access to convenient care at affordable rates is part of this equation. Salem Urology was recently taken over by Salem Health. When reviewing

this acquisition, please be sure to include in this evaluation the numerous other practices and medical entities currently owned by Salem Health...it is a disturbing situation which may ultimately end up with Salem's health care being managed and controlled by one entity. Then what will the community do?

Kyle Elwood

10. 4/22/2026

I strongly support the partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital. This collaboration is a meaningful step toward strengthening access to care in our community and ensuring we can serve more people well into the future. This type of partnership is exactly the kind of forward-thinking approach our communities need. Across Oregon, hospitals are operating at extremely thin margins-often near zero. This isn't about profits; it's about sustaining critical services and keeping care close to home. This partnership reflects a commitment to doing what is right for our community and is the right decision for the future of healthcare in our region.

Andrea Moyer

11. 4/22/2026

I live in Sublimity (aka Santiam canyon) and work for Salem Health as an RN. Salem Health is a great place to work, they value their employees but even more, they CARE about their patients (I have seen it time and time again)! I have worked for other healthcare entities and I can definitively say, "Salem Health stands apart in quality and care, not only to patients but to their employees"! Having Santiam partner with Salem Health would be such a gift to patients in the Santiam canyon and in the bordering towns. This partnership gets my vote and that of my immediate family! Thank you for your time and consideration!

Georgianne Mayer

12. 4/22/2026

I oppose this merger unless an agreement can be reached regarding Salem Health and BlueCross health insurance. Salem Health overrules the majority of healthcare in Salem already and to completely eliminate services to the population using a national insurance carrier is absurd. Many of us were forced into using Santiam Hospital when Salem Health decided to stop accepting BlueCross insurance. We fear with the merger

between Santiam and Salem, we will be forced to travel even further away from home for basic healthcare needs. I needed an Orthopedic specialist recently and had to travel to Corvallis just to be seen as I felt it was pointless to establish care with the ortho team at Santiam just for them to potentially turn around and tell me they can't see me anymore down the road should this merger go through. I firmly believe Salem Health should be required to find a solution regarding accepting BlueCross health insurance again before they're allowed to monopolize even more of the local healthcare scene.

Shelby Boston

13. 4/22/2026

My husband's employer only offers Regence Blue Cross Blue Shield insurance. When Salem Health ceased taking BCBS we were forced to find another hospital. We started to go to Santiam Hospital. If this is approved, it will severely limit our ability to go to the doctor. Please don't approve this.

Lyndee Bahr

14. 4/23/2026

My husband and I fully support this merger. We both use Santiam Hospital as our primary care facility. However, they do not have the resources or infrastructure to be able to provide after-hours or Urgent Care. We currently have to use the emergency room after hours or go to one of the Salem Health clinics. Also, since we both require specialist care not offered at Santiam, we have to go to Salem for that level of care. We are hoping the merger will allow Santiam Hospital to expand it's services in the Santiam Canyon so the local, rural community doesn't have to travel outside our area as often. We lived in Dallas for several years and utilized West Valley Hospital often, experiencing a similar situation. When West Valley merged with Salem Health, they were able to expand there level of care and offer more specialized services to the local community. There are benefits to being part of a larger organization, as long as our local facilities don't suffer.

Kimberly Haynes

15. 4/23/2026

Jimmy Jones, Executive Director of the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency, submitted a [letter](#) regarding the proposed transaction.

16. 4/23/2026

If Salem Health and Santiam Health merge my insurance coverage through BCBS will be null and void because Salem Health and BCBS have a history of and are currently with no contract. Nobody seems to care how all this plays into open season. We will just be left with "go to Legacy Health". Silverton hospital is so much further than Santiam Hospital.

Susan Crowder

17. 4/24/2026

I am a physician and would like to share my experience in regards to Salem hospital.

My wife and I moved, with our family, to Salem in 2009 to join a private medical practice (Willamette Urology). We love this community. All of our 6 children have attended public school here, enjoyed participating in sports teams and the incredible music programs.

I love my job; I feel extremely fortunate that I am able to make a living caring for others. I truly enjoy the relationships that I have formed with my patients over the last 17 years.

Across the nation, the climate for private medical practices has become increasingly more difficult with skyrocketing overhead costs, difficulty in maintaining a good work-life balance managing hospital and clinic duties and difficulty in recruiting new physicians. This is not unique to Salem; as I speak with my colleagues in other states they are all experiencing significant changes in their medical communities.

Approximately 2 years ago it became obvious that our practice was no longer sustainable and we were going to have to close our business. In an effort to keep our jobs and the jobs of our employees we approached Salem Health about the possibility of joining together. We already had a relationship with Salem Health and so it was a natural transition for us and our patients. As I have interacted with Salem Health administration and board members I have been impressed that we are aligned in our primary objective to continue to provide long term quality care for this community. The resources of Salem Health have allowed us to recruit additional physicians and other

advanced practice providers as well as provide a much more sustainable work-life balance. In my opinion, combining together has benefited me, benefited Salem Health and benefited the community.

Thank you,

Brad Warner

18. 4/25/2026

I am writing in support of the proposed partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital & Clinics. I have had the privilege of caring for patients in this community both in private practice and now as an employee and physician leader at Salem Health, and that experience has shaped how I think about access to care, stability, and what patients truly need from their healthcare system.

I want to begin by acknowledging the concerns that many in our community have raised, particularly around insurance coverage and access to care. The disruption experienced by patients with Blue Cross/Blue Shield was real, and it was deeply difficult for all of us. As physicians, our priority is always to care for our patients, and it was incredibly frustrating to be placed in a position where that continuity was interrupted. What may not be as visible is that the disagreement was not about seeking excessive increases, but rather about bringing reimbursement closer to what other insurers pay. The reality in healthcare today is that Medicare and Medicaid reimburse below the cost of care, and health systems rely on commercial insurance to sustain services, maintain staffing, and invest in the resources that patients depend on. Accepting terms that fall significantly below market rates would have required reductions that would ultimately harm access to care across the community. That was not a sustainable path, and it was not a decision made lightly. Legacy Health faced the same issues with this insurer and are now out of network, while OHSU is in a one year transition period with BC/BS for existing patients to find new care.

I also understand why some view this partnership as further consolidation or worry about a loss of choice. I shared some of those same concerns when I was in private practice. However, what I experienced firsthand is how difficult it has become for independent practices to survive. Reimbursement has not kept pace with inflation, while costs for staffing, technology, and regulatory requirements have increased significantly. In our case, joining Salem Health provided stability not only for providers,

but for staff and, most importantly, for patients. Since that transition, we have been able to grow our provider group thirty percent, expand services, and improve access in ways that would not have been possible had we remained an independent private practice. Had we sold to private equity or a national entity, I have no doubt that patients in our community would have been adversely impacted.

One of the most important aspects of Salem Health is that it remains a locally governed, nonprofit organization. That matters. It means that resources are reinvested directly into our community rather than distributed elsewhere. In many parts of the country, healthcare is increasingly controlled by large national systems or private equity, where decisions are driven purely by financial priorities. Here, we still have the ability to focus on what is best for the patients and communities we serve locally. That distinction is meaningful, particularly when we think about the long-term future of healthcare in our region.

From my perspective, this partnership with Santiam Hospital represents an opportunity to strengthen care in our region. We have already seen what is possible when systems come together thoughtfully, such as with West Valley Hospital, where services expanded and access improved for that community. Santiam plays a vital role in caring for patients in the canyon and surrounding areas, and this partnership has the potential to bring additional resources, specialty services, and stability to that region while keeping care close to home. In a time when many rural hospitals across the country are struggling to remain viable, this potential collaboration will help ensure that care remains available, and locally managed, for years to come.

Within Salem Health, I have consistently seen a commitment to improve, invest in people, and find innovative solutions when other health systems might lay off staff or reduce services. Healthcare will continue to face challenges. Next year, when OBBBA goes into effect, we will see \$1 trillion cut from Medicaid (over the next 10 years) with millions of low-income adults expected to lose coverage. In the face of such challenges, I am grateful to work at a place where we fight to preserve access, support our workforce, and are driven to deliver high-quality care to our patients.

Change is unsettling, especially when it involves healthcare. I feel this partnership reflects a thoughtful effort to strengthen care for our community. It helps ensure that patients in our region continue to have access to the care they need, close to home, both now and in the future. It is about making sure that when someone in our

community needs care, whether it is in the middle of the night or when they face a difficult diagnosis, they have somewhere to go, someone to trust, and a system that is strong enough to be there for them.

Sudeep Taksali, MD, MHA

19. 4/27/2026

Family Building Blocks submitted a [letter](#) regarding the proposed transaction.

20. 4/27/2026

To the Oregon Health Authority,

I understand that Salem and Santiam hospitals are proposing to merge. I also learned that this agreement requires approval by the Oregon Health Authority.

I'm writing today to share my concern about this deal. Oregonians are seeing rising health care costs, fewer choices of providers and longer wait-times for critical appointments.

We need our state to use its power to ensure that Oregonians can access the health care they need in their local communities and when they need it. Please take a hard look at this proposed merger and make sure it does not harm patients.

Sincerely,

This public comment was sent to HCMO by each of the following individuals:

Leah Leah Castillo

Carma Desantis

Eve Lyle

Charlene Houtz

Pamela Veelle

Susan Stafford

Michelle Williams

Audrey Muller

Carol Shaw-Slife

Linda Diaz

Carolyn Hutcheson

Daniel M. Potter

Sharon Hill

Carol Shaw-Slife

Marcia LeBlanc

Curt Eggleston

Audrey Muller

Pamela Veelle

Donna Reed

Tina Mulkey

Carma Desantis

Nick Hansen

Linda Diaz

Elizabeth Darby

Michael Hoover

Robin Bochsler

Donlon McGovern

Scott Kennedy

Debby y Mcknight

Carma Desantis

Barbara Irish

Anna Salgado

21. 4/24/2026

I think this will be great for the community. I was part of a struggling private practice before Salem Health came in and gave us the resources we needed to better help our patients. From my standpoint as a provider, this merger will help to streamline specialty care for those who seek care at Santiam.

Philip Rosen

22. 4/24/2026

Salem Health is an amazing organization to work with as a nonprofit that works alongside them often. I also really appreciate the small-town feel of the West Valley Hospital. The staff is friendly and you can get a lab or radiology appointment very quickly as they offer evening and weekend appointments. So thankful for them!

Glenda Dunaway

23. 4/24/2026

Please don't let this merger happen. Salem Health has already taken over many of the clinics and we already have very limited options for healthcare in Salem besides Kaiser.

Fraser Wick

24. 4/25/2026

Provider Comment – Support for Salem Health–Santiam Hospital & Clinics Partnership

I am writing in strong support of Salem Health's proposed partnership with Santiam Hospital & Clinics. My name is Martin C. Johnson II, MD, and I serve as a Pulmonary Medicine Physician at Salem Hospital, where I care for patients across the mid-Willamette Valley. In my role, I provide specialty pulmonary, sleep and critical care services to patients working alongside an exceptional team of physicians, nurses, respiratory therapists, and caregivers committed to improving the health of our region. Throughout my 30-year tenure at Salem Health, I have had the privilege of caring for a diverse patient population, including patients with chronic lung disease, acute respiratory illness, and other complex medical needs requiring coordinated inpatient and outpatient care. Salem Health's commitment to evidence-based, patient-centered

care is readily evident in my daily practice. I have seen firsthand how coordinated systems of care, access to specialty services, and investment in clinical teams and infrastructure translate directly into better outcomes for patients, and Salem Health consistently invests in the tools, training, and culture necessary to make this a reality in a compassionate, high-quality, and sustainable manner. The proposed partnership with Santiam Hospital & Clinics and Salem Health represents a critical extension of this mission beyond the walls of our primary facilities. Together, Salem Health and Santiam Hospital & Clinics are better positioned to address the growing challenges facing health care today, including declining reimbursements, increasing regulatory demands, workforce shortages, and the need to preserve access for uninsured and Medicaid patients. These challenges cannot be solved by any single organization acting alone. This partnership will enable both organizations to strengthen and stabilize care delivery across the mid-Willamette Valley, particularly by supporting rural care delivered locally whenever possible. By aligning resources, expertise, and systems, this collaboration will help reduce barriers to timely care, improve care coordination, and ensure that patients can access needed services closer to home. For patients with serious or chronic respiratory illness or sleep medicine problems, this integration is especially important, as continuity and early access can significantly affect outcomes. Importantly, this partnership will add to and strengthen the continuum of care in our region rather than detract from it. The stability provided by this collaboration is critical at a time when communities across the nation are experiencing unprecedented strain on health care systems. Equally important, this partnership preserves local, nonprofit governance and decision-making that remains accountable to the needs of the mid-Willamette Valley—something that cannot be replicated by an out-of-state, for-profit entity.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer my perspective. I am grateful to be part of the thoughtful work underway to strengthen health care in our region, and I am honored to add my voice in support. I strongly endorse this partnership and encourage your favorable consideration.

Respectfully,

Martin C. Johnson II, MD

Pulmonary/Critical Care/Sleep Medicine

Salem Health

25. 4/27/2026

Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Oregon submitted a [letter](#) regarding the proposed transaction.

26. 4/2/2026

I am writing in strong support of Salem Health's proposed partnership with Santiam Hospital & Clinics. My name is Matt Egalka MD and I serve as the medical director of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and the Chair of the Credentials Committee at Salem Hospital, where I have practiced for 7 years. In my role, I provide neonatal intensive care services to patients throughout the mid-Willamette Valley, working alongside an exceptional team of physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses and other caregivers committed to our region's health.

Throughout my tenure at Salem Health, I have had the privilege of caring for the tiniest residents of the mid-Willamette Valley. In 2019 my family and I moved to Salem from Texas so I could take the opportunity to work in a world-class NICU committed to quality care. Salem Health's commitment to evidence-based, patient-centered health care is evident in every aspect of our work. As an example, we have made meaningful strides in reducing the burden of respiratory viral diseases on our community, and I have witnessed firsthand how access to coordinated, high-quality services transforms the lives of the people we serve. Salem Health consistently invests in the tools, training and culture needed to deliver care that is both compassionate and clinically excellent.

This partnership with Santiam Hospital & Clinics represents a critical extension of the care we provide within our walls. Together, we are working to ensure that uninsured and Medicaid patients don't lose access to care - a challenge that no single organization can solve alone. This partnership will allow Salem Health to stabilize health care across the mid-Willamette Valley, reach people where they are, reduce barriers to care, and improve health outcomes across our entire service area. This collaboration has the potential to make a real difference for the patients I care for, and I am confident that continued investment in this work will yield lasting results for our community's health and well-being.

Importantly, this partnership will add to and strengthen the continuum of care in the mid-Willamette Valley, not detract from it. The stability that this partnership will yield is

critical to our region at a time when there are historic challenges to health care delivery across the nation. And it will do so while remaining committed to local, non-profit governance that considers the needs of the mid-Willamette Valley in a way that an out-of-state, for-profit organization never would.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer my support. I am grateful to be a part of thoughtful work being done to strengthen health care in our region and am honored to add my voice to this effort. I endorse this partnership and encourage your favorable consideration.

Matt Egalka

27. 4/28/2026

I have been working as a neurosurgeon at Salem Health since 8/1/1983 and have worn many leadership hats.

I have dedicated my time to the best possible neurosurgical practice and have always committed myself to improving the health care provided to my brethren in the city considering it my duty.

I was within a few years chief of surgery at Salem Health, and in those early years developed a relationship with physicians in the Dallas area, and performed surgeries at the Dallas Community Hospital, now West Valley Hospital, part of the Salem Health consortium. I did the same in Stayton, developing a relationship with those physicians, and doing appropriate surgeries at the Santiam Hospital.

As managed care impacted the medical care I played a key role in the early development of the Mid-Valley IPA, now the WVP Health Authority. I am sharing this to share the extent of my experience in medicine, and in neurosurgery in particular, but also to convey I am keenly aware of the socioeconomic forces that have been at play in the last 42 years in our mid-valley medical community.

Early on I felt it was key for the physicians to have a strong independent voice alongside our hospitals in the interest of providing best possible health care for our community and I often expressed concern for the ""800-pound gorilla"" alias Salem Health in past years. However, with the socioeconomic trends at play, the majority of physicians are becoming employed physicians in the last 15 years. Very few independent specialty services remain standing which had been a concern to me that

those independent voices bringing their independent perspective to bear on the health care of our community could become diminished.

With this as background, what I have been seeing is that the survival of the smaller rural hospitals has become impossible from a financial standpoint as well as from a liability exposure. Though I have implied my concern throughout the past years of Salem Health control of the medical community at large, what I have seen up close is the positive, thoughtful evolution of the Salem Health Board and its administration. Over 10 years ago they developed and committed to a ""Compact to Collaboration"" between physicians, the Board and the Salem Health administration. They have increasingly been putting physicians and other health care providers in key leadership positions to empower them within the organization. As chair of the Surgical Department, even as an independent physician, I have been heard, and I feel they truly listen with a true recognition that the system works best when most inclusive, and values all its members, particularly those in the front lines of health care delivery. I have seen their sensitivity to the Dallas community as they took over their hospital facility and how they have strengthened the bonds and the effective of this facility in serving its community.

I happen to know many members of the Santiam Hospital Board, a group that has worked very hard to keep their wonderful institution viable, now recognize that to best serve their community this merger is an absolute necessity. They recognized independently they were not viable and have been looking at what type of merger would serve them best and have seen the evolution of our Salem Health hospital leaders and administration close up so as to feel proud of the way they are going. The Santiam Hospital Board and the Santiam Hospital administration is seeing this decision as the best way forward.

I would urge the HCMO to recognize that with the current socioeconomic forces at play, with the increasing cost of health care due to the magnificent technological developments, employment of top-quality health care individuals, and increasing use of AI for improved and more reliable health care the allowing of Salem Health and Santiam Hospital to merge is the most responsible action you can take for our respective communities.

Respectfully, Mauricio Collada Jr. MD

28. 4/28/2026

I am writing in full, unmitigated support of Salem Health's proposed partnership with Santiam Hospital and Clinics. I have been a physician employee of Salem Health for the past 15 1/2 years serving as a Women's Health provider. During that time the health care landscape has changed considerably leading to real threats of decreased access to care for all populations, but especially Women's Health. Salem Health has remained dedicated to assuring that there is ready access to quality health care in and around Salem. Yes, Salem Health has grown, but it has grown to maintain the ability of Salem residents to seek and receive care in the very city they live. Surrounding communities have had to cede decisions about what type of care is available to corporate entities leading to a decrease in patient access. Salem Health has worked with community providers to assure that this does not happen here and that continuity in services remains. Our colleagues at Santiam are doing that same work. By partnering we will be able to maintain access to care where people live by further reducing barriers. This is especially true for Women's Services. There have been multiple reports over the last couple of years of birth centers closing and of "maternity deserts" where women need to drive far to receive basic prenatal and maternity care. The Salem Health and Santiam partnership will take two developed Women's Health systems, each with their own strengths, and make them even stronger through collaboration and coordination across the spectrum of Women's Health care. The overall result is expanded access in the Mid-Valley for all levels of care. My goal as a physician is to serve my community by providing readily available, high-quality care- the partnership between Salem Health and Santiam assures that I will be able to do that for many years to come.

Lisa Rice

29. 4/28/2026

I am writing in support of Salem Health's proposed partnership with Santiam Hospital & Clinics. My name is Christine Clarke, MD, MBA, and I have been a member of the Salem Hospital medical staff since 2007.

A graduate of Silverton Union High School, I was delighted to return home to the Willamette Valley after completing my military service obligation to practice surgery in an independent practice here in Salem. The Willamette Valley is where I am from, and it is where I wanted to build my career.

Through the 2010s, regulatory pressures on small independent practices continued to rise, and in 2015 I became an employee of Salem Health Medical Group. That decision was an easy one. Salem Health is a place where I want to care for patients — its culture mirrors what I knew in the military: mission driven, service before self, and a relentless commitment to improvement. I am grateful to practice within a system that emphasizes quality, evidence-based care and genuine respect for people.

I understand that from the outside, some may worry that Salem Health is simply absorbing local independent practices. My experience tells a different story. Salem Health has been a lifeboat for independent providers in our community who are navigating a sea of rising regulation, increasing costs and declining reimbursement — offering a way to stay in practice and continue serving the communities we call home.

Having grown up in the east Willamette Valley, I understand the value Santiam Hospital and Clinics brings to the people of Stayton and the surrounding area. This partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital and Clinics will strengthen and stabilize health care across our region, reduce care fragmentation and improve outcomes — all through locally governed, not-for-profit care. As both a medical professional and a member of this community, I enthusiastically endorse this partnership and ask for your favorable consideration.

Christine Clarke

30. 4/28/2026

Alisha Oliver, Board Chair of the Stayton Sublimity Chamber of Commerce submitted a [letter](#) regarding the proposed transaction.

31. 4/29/2026

As an employee of Salem Health, but also as a community member with family living in the Santiam Hospital area, I felt the need to comment regarding the potential merge between the two hospitals. For context, I work as a Certified Wound, Ostomy, Continence Nurse and provide care to patients within the Willamette Valley and Coastal areas.

Patients who require surgery at Santiam Hospital and subsequently receive some type of Ostomy (ileostomy or colostomy) are at a disadvantage at Santiam Hospital. While many nurses are equipped to support patients with various ailments, Ostomy Nurses

specialize in the area of supporting patients with such a major change in their health and provide teaching prior to discharge home. Ostomy nurses provide daily teaching to patients/family, emotional support in the days following surgery, and set up necessary ostomy supplies prior to discharge. Without seeing the patient, I am tasked with asking questions of the Care Manager to view the ostomy so that I know what supplies the patient will require for discharge. That is like asking someone to cook a meal without giving them a recipe. Currently, the care management team from Santiam, will reach out to me to get the patient set up for supplies at discharge and set up their first appointment with the Ostomy nurse in Salem. For the elderly patients or patients with limited transportation options, coming to Salem is difficult at best.

It is with great hope, that the merger between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital becomes a reality. Santiam would benefit from the support of specialty services like mine to keep patients within their community without incurring additional expense to travel to Salem for this type of care. The long-term goal and ask would be to have at least one inpatient Certified Wound, Ostomy, Contenance nurse on staff and potentially have additional Certified Wound/Ostomy nurses to support the Advanced Wound Clinic as well. The Santiam Hospital community deserve that level of expertise in both wound and ostomy and those patients require that level of support moving forward.

Malinda Close

32. 4/29/2026

I agree with the plan to have these hospitals partner. Together, they will be able to offer expanded services and better care for the Willamette Valley community. Increasing access to providers and medical specialties will improve health outcomes.

Christine Morales

33. 4/29/2026

To Whom it May Concern,

On behalf of the Medical Executive Committee at Salem Health, we are writing to express our support for the Salem Health and Santiam Hospital and Clinics partnership. The MEC at Salem Health is made up of both employed and private practice physicians, positioning us well to witness the enormous healthcare access

difficulties facing our residents from two unique perspectives, but we remain unified in our goals for the people and communities we serve.

As physicians and medical providers, we are passionate about providing excellent, evidence-based, holistic care to our community. As Oregonians, it is important to us that care remains local and that access to care be preserved. This is particularly important in rural areas like Stayton where access to care may be hindered or limited.

Salem Health consistently invests in the tools, training and culture to deliver this type of care. We wholeheartedly support this partnership and believe it will enable greater access to healthcare in a time when there are many challenges facing hospital systems.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer our support for this important partnership.

Sincerely,

The Medical Executive Committee at Salem Health

34. 4/30/2026

In my 40 years at Salem Health, I have seen how a strong organizational culture translates directly into better patient care. Santiam Hospital has built something beautiful - a team that knows its community and delivers care with a personal touch. This partnership is not about one organization absorbing another. It is about taking the strengths of both and combining them in a way that benefits every patient who walks through the doors. I grew up in Stayton and had many visits to the hospital. Although I don't live in the community anymore, I understand their concern about joining Salem Health and rightfully so. The pride of the community supporting their local hospital is very strong, with many people wanting to keep that separate. In today's world of health care, joining with a larger partner is about giving the community local access to many different kinds of advanced healthcare, that are so very expensive to small communities trying to afford the best care for everyone.

Mark Smith

35. 4/30/2026

As a long-time supporter of Santiam Hospital, I appreciate the thoughtful approach being taken as this proposed partnership with Salem Health is considered. I have been

encouraged by the direct engagement from both CEOs—Maggie Hudson, President & CEO of Santiam Hospital & Clinics, and Cheryl Nester Wolfe, President & CEO of Salem Health—who have taken the time to attend Service Integration Team meetings and listen closely to our communities.

Their shared commitment to Service Integration Teams, and to sustaining these teams in the canyon, matters deeply to those of us who see the impact of this work every day. The willingness of leadership to show up, engage, and affirm the importance of local collaboration gives me confidence.

I am proud of Santiam Hospital's long-standing role in our region and look forward to what this partnership could bring—strengthening services, expanding opportunities, and supporting the health and well-being of the communities we serve across the Mid-Willamette Valley.

Colleen Bradford

36. 4/30/2026

SACC voices organizational SUPPORT for partnership.

Tom Hoffert

37. 4/30/2026

My name is Brent DeMoe and I'm the Director of Polk County's Family & Community Outreach Department. I know the merger has already been approved, but I wanted to offer some positive comments from my perspective.

My department has partnered and collaborated with Salem Health and West Valley Hospital for nearly 20 years. A few examples of this include the following:

1) Salem Health has been our medical sponsor for the Central Health And Wellness Center, a unique school based health center model that has been in operation for more than 10 years.

2) Salem Health has supported the Polk County Service Integration Program for nearly 25 years. This program was adopted by Santiam Hospital and Clinics about seven years ago. I've been encouraged to hear that the merger will not interfere with the amazing Service Integration Program Santiam has operated. It is important that these

models continue as they are one of the best examples of making sure that rural areas are connected to services.

Moving forward, understanding and honoring the unique attributes and strengths of rural communities will make this new partnership a success.

38. 4/30/2026

Over the years my family and I have utilized the Santiam ER instead of the Salem ER (despite living only a couple miles away from and being a long-time employee of Salem Health) and have gotten the best and fastest service at Santiam ER, is that going to change now? They always treat you at Santiam like a human and not just a number. I understand that Salem Hospital has been the busiest ER on the west coast for over 25 years now and why you are just a #, but Santiam is different and makes you feel like you matter and are just not another #.

Rolanda Davis

39. 5/1/2026

On behalf of the Santiam Hospital Auxiliary, we write to express our strong support for the proposed partnership between Santiam Hospital & Clinics and Salem Health Hospitals & Clinics. For decades, the Auxiliary has proudly supported Santiam Hospital and its vital role in providing quality healthcare and promoting community welfare throughout the Santiam Canyon and surrounding rural communities.

The mission of the Santiam Hospital Auxiliary is to work in alignment with the broader mission of Santiam Hospital & Clinics by supporting quality care, strengthening community well-being, and investing in the future of local healthcare. Through volunteer service, fundraising efforts, and scholarship support, the Auxiliary remains deeply committed to ensuring healthcare services remain accessible, compassionate, and sustainable for the region.

A cornerstone of the Auxiliary's work is its Scholarship Program, which provides financial support to students who reside within Santiam Hospital's service area and are pursuing education in qualified medical and health-related fields. This investment reflects the Auxiliary's belief that sustaining local healthcare depends on developing and supporting the next generation of healthcare professionals. A partnership with

Salem Health offers the opportunity to further strengthen workforce development, recruitment, and long-term stability across the region.

The Auxiliary also raises funds through a variety of community events, with proceeds directly supporting hospital programs, equipment, and patient-centered initiatives. These efforts are made possible by community members who care deeply about the future of Santiam Hospital and the services it provides. Maintaining strong, locally responsive healthcare services requires collaboration, shared resources, and strategic partnerships that ensure long-term sustainability.

From the perspective of the Santiam Hospital Auxiliary, the proposed partnership represents a thoughtful and forward-looking opportunity to sustain essential services, expand access to care, and support the caregivers and programs our community relies upon. It aligns with the Auxiliary's mission and values while honoring Santiam Hospital's long-standing commitment to community-based care.

For these reasons, the Santiam Hospital Auxiliary supports the proposed partnership and appreciates the Oregon Health Authority's careful consideration of its potential to strengthen healthcare access, stability, and community benefit for the region.

Genny Baldwin

40. 5/1/2026

The Salem Health-Santiam merger is exactly what we need; it harnesses the strengths of both systems. Working in the health care field, I know first-hand the difficulties of keeping up with technology, finding doctors, retaining nurses, negotiating contracts . . . there is strength in numbers. Plus, both hospitals WANT this, it's not a monopoly or "take over" like some uninformed people claim. Please do the right thing and help our hospitals and clinics meet the growing demand for health care.

Shannon Priem

41. 5/1/2026

As a Canyon community member, I fully support the partnership between Salem Health and Santiam. Our community values access to care that is strong today and positioned to grow alongside us—offering more options for ourselves, our families, and our neighbors as our needs evolve.

A partnership between Salem Health and Santiam represents a meaningful opportunity to build on what we already have. Together, they can strengthen local healthcare, broaden access to high-quality services and clinical excellence, expand the workforce, and ensure care remains available and close when it matters most.

This partnership means fewer long drives, more time spent with the people we love, and more healthcare resources invested right here in our community. It supports seamless continuity of care through shared medical records, making the healthcare experience smoother and less stressful. It fortifies local healthcare and helps ensure our system is owned and operated by those who we live, work and play alongside – not out of state companies who are disconnected from our needs. Most importantly, it brings peace of mind—the confidence that our community will continue to receive reliable, compassionate care now and for generations to come.

Tricia Frizell

42. 5/1/2026

I'm the president of the AWPPW local 396. I represent 106 employees at the Packaging corporation of America corrugated paper box plant in Salem. We are covered by BCBS health insurance and can not go to any Salem health facility. Salem Health's monopoly of Healthcare providers in the area severely limits my members access to healthcare. The merger of Salem health and the Santiam Hospital would further exasperate this worsening situation. We are running out of places to go. I myself have recently been diagnosed with fatty liver disease, diabetes, and heart problems. It's taken awhile to get diagnosed. I was thrown out of the family practice I went to in Dallas, OR for 30 years after Salem Health bought it, and negotiations collapsed with BCBS. It's been a struggle finding area providers who have not been bought by Salem Health. On behalf of myself, and those I represent, I urge you to please deny the merger of Salem Health and Santiam Hospital.

Bill Randall

43. 5/1/2026

I am writing in support of the Salem Health and Santiam partnership because access to high-quality healthcare close to home matters to my family and our community. Our life in the Santiam Canyon region runs across generations, and more than once we have relied on Santiam's emergency room when life threw us a curveball—after an

injury while playing at the lake, an accident on the farm, breathing troubles during COVID, or in the middle of the night when our son needed urgent care.

We have also experienced exceptional care at Salem Health when a higher level of care was needed, including premature births requiring extended NICU stays, both planned and emergency surgeries, cancer treatments, and ongoing management of long-term health conditions. Together, these facilities form a healthcare network our family depends on and trusts.

This partnership benefits the entire Mid-Willamette Valley. Rural hospitals across the country are struggling, and far too many are closing, decreasing services or not in a position to grow with increased community needs. Supporting this partnership helps ensure our healthcare remains local, accessible, and guided by a nonprofit system with a proven history of reinvesting in the entire Mid-Willamette Valley.

Tyson Frizzell

44. 5/1/2026

I'm writing to share my strong opposition to the proposed merger between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital. As someone who has lived in the Aumsville area for over 36 years, I've seen firsthand how important it is to have accessible, local healthcare options. From where I sit, this move would only tighten Salem Health's already firm grip on healthcare in the Salem and Santiam area—and that's not a good thing.

Salem Health already operates as a monopoly with very little real competition locally. Letting them expand even further would shrink patient choice, limit access, and put downward pressure on the overall quality of care. We've all seen how that story plays out.

It's especially concerning for patients with Regence BlueCross BlueShield, who currently don't have access to Salem Health facilities at all. If Santiam Hospital is absorbed into their system, those patients will be left with even fewer practical options for care without having to travel unreasonable distances. That's not just inconvenient—it's a real barrier.

The Santiam community deserves a healthcare environment that actually works for patients—one with options, competition, and fair access regardless of insurance. This merger moves us in the opposite direction.

I urge the Oregon Health Authority to reject this proposal and protect the healthcare choices available to people in the Santiam area.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Shelly Mullins

45. 4/30/2026

The Marion County Board of Commissioners submitted a [letter of support](#) regarding the proposed transaction.

46. 4/30/2026

The Santiam Hospital & Clinics Foundation Board President, Dr. Guesly Dessieux, submitted a [letter of support](#) regarding the proposed transaction.

47. 4/30/2026

Comment rescinded.

48. 4/30/2026

The Salem Chamber's Board of Directors submitted a [letter of support](#) regarding the proposed transaction.

49. 5/1/2026

Commissioner Tucker submitted a [letter of support](#) regarding the proposed transaction.

50. 5/1/2026

Michael Gay submitted a [letter of support](#) regarding the proposed transaction.

51. 5/2/2026

While the connection of resources is great, as a Salem ED nurse, and the consistent problems with insurances no providing reimbursement, followed by being dropped by clinics and hospitals, we are seeing increased burden here in the ED. Individuals are not getting their prescriptions because they no longer have PCPs, this leads to further exacerbations of their chronic medical problems, increased patient load and negative patient outcomes. Currently SH does not take blue cross blue shield insurance,

Santiam does. I am concerned that the Santiam canyon individuals will run into the same problem.

Samantha Nicholls

52. 5/2/2026

I am a specialty private practice specialty physician in Salem, and I think most specialists are looking forward to the merger. We often get referrals without the ability to access all the necessary information to provide proper care. This occurs in both the outpatient and inpatient settings. Communication with referring providers is often difficult, and one integrated EHR and system would greatly improve care. It will also reduce cost by limiting the duplication of tests that were already performed but for which we did not get results. West Valley Hospital should serve as a great example of how a local hospital can focus on its own community while also bringing in expertise from a larger system to improve care for the people it serves.

Brett Mikeska, MD

53. 5/2/2026

Since January of 2025, I have been unable to use the services of Salem Health. Their take overs of independent medical establishments has severely affected my network of providers. Not only can I not use Salem Health or Salem hospital, the have taken over the urology clinic that I was under. There are no other alternatives in Salem. My Orthopaedic clinic is also now owned by Salem Health as is CV my Oncologist and cardiologist. I have had to seek out alternatives as well as my primary care provider. Now if I need hospital treatment I have to travel to another town , namely Stayton where Santiam hospital is located. I'm sure that I am not the only person that has Regence insurance that is concerned over the Monopoly Salem Health have

Terry Marsh

54. 5/4/2026

I believe this partnership will strengthen health services available in our area and allow for a stronger continuum of care for patients of both systems

Shauna Love

55. 5/4/2026

I do not support the merger of Santiam Health and Salem Hospital. All Monopolies are concerning! Salem Health restricts some of the insurance companies that they will accept that Santiam does cover limiting choices for general public and Medicare. Broader choices is ALWAYS better for Oregons citizens. When people are denied coverage for a whole area to minimal choices it forces the public to change venue or doctors causing hardship and stress. It also can have a big effect on premiums and billing for testing and procedures. At this point in time, it is already extremely difficult to find a doctor in this area of the state accepting new patients without insurance company llimitations and the waiting periods for appointments and procedures are already out several months.

Karen Mullins

56. 5/5/2026

I have received care from Salem Health for as long as I can remember. I was admitted to the hospital in the middle of 2020 and while heavy restrictions were still in place, I felt like that care was exceptional even in the midst of the pandemic. Everyone was very caring and sympathetic and helped me get in touch with family since support visitors were not allowed at this time. I was not left in the dark about my care plan and rarely had questions since they had always been answered before I could even ask! I believe the partnership with Santiam could only strengthen the quality of care within Willamette Valley and surrounding communities. I also believe that it is a "need" rather than a "want" within our community.

Madelyn Hanes

57. 5/5/2026

I think this transaction will be good for expansion of services in the Santiam canyon. I am a RN at Salem Health. I know there are concerns about coverage of BC/BS patients with this merger

Miranda Schotthoefler

58. 5/5/2026

I joined Salem Health because I believed in what it stands for. The mission — to improve the health and well-being of the people and communities we serve — guided that decision, and it has shaped my work every day since. This partnership with

Santiam Hospital is a natural extension of that mission into a community that deserves the same investment we have made here. I support it because it is the right thing to do.

I have a personal connection to this issue. I have relied on a small community hospital myself and that experience shapes how I think about this partnership. Access to local health care is not something people think about until they need it — and when they need it, nothing else matters more.

Working in health care is one of the most meaningful things a person can do — and one of the hardest. Caring for people in pain, navigating loss and showing up day after day in high-stakes environments can take a toll. At Salem Health, we have worked hard to build a culture of resilience: one that acknowledges the weight of this work, invests in staff well-being and creates the conditions for our incredibly skilled staff and providers to sustain a long and fulfilling career. I am proud of what we have built, and I believe this partnership will extend that same culture of care to the team at Santiam Hospital — because they deserve it too.

I am proud to work for an organization that takes its responsibility to the broader community seriously, and I am confident this partnership reflects that same commitment. I respectfully ask that the Oregon Health Authority approve this application. Thank you for your consideration.

Denise Pierce

59. 5/5/2026

While I understand the need for Santiam Hospital and Clinics to stay solvent, I am concerned with them becoming part of Salem Health.

Salem Health has acquired several local businesses in the Salem area over the last several years. It is difficult to get a timely appointment for medical care and patients are referred to the Emergency Department resulting in hours of sitting and waiting and a referral back to your primary caregiver taking weeks or months to get timely medical attention, making it feel like we are on a hamster wheel!

The lack of a valid contract between Salem Health and BlueCross/Blueshield has forced many of us to seek medical care with Santiam Hospital and Clinics (which we love!). A merger of services will greatly affect those of us that have

BlueCross/Blueshield in the Dallas, Salem, Silverton and up the canyon towards the Detroit areas.

How far are we supposed to travel to get medical attention? It feels like we will be pushed to the Bend area if this is approved.

Why isn't there a limit on how much of services are controlled by one monopoly that it feels already can't take care of their community?

While I understand the desire for Santiam Hospital and Clinics to seek this, I am afraid the many physicians who left Salem Health and are now at Santiam will leave the area resulting in diminished medical options in our community.

While I am only one voice, I hope you consider mine and all others who are not in favor of this merger.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my opinion.

Tina Hurlbutt

Salem, OR

60. 5/5/2026

In today's times it is extremely import that companies grow and consolidate together. Staying small and not growing regionally would be the downfall to both hospitals. Synergies in services and purchasing will greatly benefit both hospitals and their patients. Not to mention the rural clinics. Both hospitals have an excellent standing within their community so it will be a natural fix for them to be combined. State and both hospitals leadership have to be on the same page 100% in order for this to be successful for all of the communities. Direct patient care has always been the cornerstone for each hospital. Oregon cannot be short side by not moving forward with this initiative. Look at the national number of how many hospitals that have close especially in rural areas that should have had a solid anchor to support them.

Dan Bell

61. 5/5/2026

I am writing in strong support of Salem Health's proposed partnership with Santiam Hospital & Clinics. My name is Jennifer Williams, MD, and I serve as an

Anesthesiologist and the Chair of the Multidisciplinary Peer Review Committee at Salem Hospital, where I have practiced for almost 25 years. In my role, I provide anesthesia and peri-operative care services to patients throughout the mid-Willamette Valley, working alongside an exceptional team of physicians, nurses and other caregivers committed to our region's health.

Throughout my tenure at Salem Health, I have had the privilege of caring for a broadly diverse patient population who come to Salem Health for surgery or other procedures, diagnostic tests, and obstetric care. Salem Health's commitment to evidence-based, patient-centered health care is evident in every aspect of our work. I have seen firsthand how coordinated systems of care, access to specialty services, and investment in clinical teams and infrastructure translate directly into better outcomes for patients, and Salem Health consistently invests in the tools, training, and culture necessary to deliver compassionate, high-quality patient care that is both sustainable and clinically excellent.

For example, approximately 5 years ago it became obvious that the Anesthesiology private practice model for hospital-based care was no longer sustainable in Salem. Across the nation, the climate for private medical practices has become increasingly more difficult with skyrocketing overhead costs and decreasing reimbursements leading to difficulty in health care workers' maintaining a reasonable work-life balance and therefore difficulty in recruiting new physicians and retaining those we have. This is not unique to Salem; medical practitioners throughout the country are experiencing similar significant changes in their medical communities. Salem Hospital stepped in to ensure our busy operating rooms remained open without disruption in surgical care for our community and to support our Salem based anesthesiologists through the offer of hospital employment. The resources of Salem Health have allowed us to recruit additional physicians and other advanced practice providers, expand clinical services, and provide a more sustainable work-life balance thereby stabilizing our work force. In my opinion, these efforts have benefited not only my colleagues and me but Salem Health and the broader Salem community.

The proposed partnership with Santiam Hospital & Clinics represents a critical extension of the Salem Health mission to improve the health and well-being of the people and communities we serve. Together, Salem Health and Santiam Hospital & Clinics are better positioned to protect access to care for uninsured and Medicaid

patients - a challenge that no single organization can solve alone. This partnership will strengthen and stabilize health care throughout the mid-Willamette Valley, reduce barriers to care, and improve health outcomes across our entire service area. This collaboration has the potential to make a real difference for the patients I care for, and I am confident that continued investment in this work will yield lasting results for our community's health and well-being. The stability that this partnership will provide is critical to our region at a time when there are historic challenges to health care delivery across the nation. And it will do so while remaining committed to local, non-profit governance that considers the needs of the mid-Willamette Valley in a way that cannot be achieved by an out-of-state, for-profit entity.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer my support. I am grateful to be a part of thoughtful work underway to strengthen health care in our region and enthusiastically add my voice in support. I endorse this partnership and encourage your favorable consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Williams, MD

62. 5/5/2026

To Whom It May Concern: I am a nurse at Salem Health Spine Center and take great pride in being part of Salem Health. I believe that a partnership with Santiam will be advantageous for everyone involved. I live close to Stayton and feel that having Santiam collaborate with Salem Health will not only strengthen both organizations, but most importantly, it will greatly benefit the patients they serve. This message represents my support for the partnership. Thank you for your time and consideration.
Best, Georgianne Mayer, BSN, RN, CNOR

63. 5/6/2026

I am a resident of West Salem and am a registered nurse; my family and I also receive care at Salem Health Hospitals and Clinics. I support the partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital. This partnership will strengthen Santiam's ability to stay open and relevant in today's financial market, and will only strengthen healthcare in this rural environment. The most important pieces of this partnership, in my opinion, will be the shared electronic medical records. Having fast access to accurate and

complete medical records is vital in an emergency. The impact of this partnership will ultimately be better patient care and improved patient outcomes.

Patti Moore

64. 5/6/2026

I am a Salem Health employee writing to express my strong support of the Salem Health/Santiam partnership for the following reasons:

1. **INSURANCE.** In my five months of working at Salem Health, I've had the opportunity to get a clearer understanding of how medical insurance interacts with medical facilities. Many people want to blame Salem Health for refusing to accept BCBS, Medicaid/Medicare; HOWEVER, the real issue is that those entities cover only a small fraction of the cost of services. No one stays in business long if the cost of services is dramatically greater than income! It's simple math. The number of medical facilities ABLE to accept Blue Cross / Blue Shield will keep dwindling until they catch up with the realities of current medical costs and adopt reasonable reimbursement rates for hospitals.

Salem Health made the fiscally responsible decision to discontinue BCBS, to ensure continued care for those we serve.

2. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT.** I believe it is important to keep Santiam under local management. Decision-makers are more likely to have clear perspectives of local needs and resources. They will be able to engage with the local community in more meaningful ways. And, of course, revenue will be more closely tied to Oregon instead of leaving the state for corporate pockets elsewhere.

I think the people who shout, ""MONOPOLY!"" might change their tune if they could see just how much effort Salem Health puts into cutting costs and working as close to the ""break even"" point as possible. It's not a power-hungry giant, as some claim.

I'm deeply impressed with Salem Health's ability to integrate quality care with fiscal responsibility. That care extends not just to patients but to their employees as well. I'm proud to be a part of this organization, and I look forward to many years of serving here.

Faith Gerber

65. 5/6/2026

To the Oregon Health Authority Health Care Market Oversight Program:

My name is Bobby Gray, and I serve as an Information Technology Director at Salem Health Hospitals & Clinics, where I've worked for over 10 years. My family and I have also been patients at Salem Health during this time, and we have consistently received excellent care.

In my role, I oversee teams that support the technology infrastructure our clinicians and staff depend on every day — from our Epic electronic health record to the communication systems that connect care teams across facilities. That vantage point gives me a clear view of what it takes to deliver reliable, coordinated health care across a regional system.

A partnership with Santiam Hospital & Clinics would strengthen both organizations in ways I see firsthand. Bringing Santiam onto a shared Epic and MyChart platform would give patients across the mid-Willamette Valley and Santiam Canyon a seamless experience — one medical record, one patient portal, fewer gaps in care. From an operations standpoint, shared resources and reduced duplicative costs make both organizations more sustainable, and that stability matters for the communities we serve.

What stands out to me most is that this partnership keeps health care local. Santiam would remain locally governed and locally led, while gaining access to the infrastructure and support that a larger partner can provide. That's especially important for rural access — patients in the Santiam Canyon deserve the same quality and continuity of care available in Salem.

I appreciate the opportunity to share my perspective with HCMO. I strongly support this partnership and encourage the Oregon Health Authority to approve it.

Respectfully, Bobby Gray, IT Systems Director, Salem Health Hospitals & Clinics

66. 5/6/2026

My name is Molly M. Rom, and I serve as Manager of Clinic Onboarding and Expansion at Salem Health.

When I first joined Salem Health in 2015, I was immediately struck by our lean journey and the way the patient is truly at the center of everything we do. Prior to my current role, I was part of the team that coached the lean management system to frontline staff, leaders, and providers. Through that work, I saw firsthand how our teams use lean principles to implement meaningful improvements with lasting impact for our patients and community. Examples include improving medication storage processes in anesthesia to prevent safety risks in labor and delivery, strengthening communication between nursing staff, hospitalists, and cardiologists on night shift to enhance care on our Cardiac Vascular Care Unit, improving stroke outcomes in the Emergency Department with a Stroke Stop, and reducing errors in clinic check-in processes. Salem Health has made a deep investment in equipping every employee to continuously ask how we can improve the patient and staff experience.

In my current role, I see daily the importance of coordinated, patient-centered care and how strong operational support with our lean culture directly impacts both patient and staff experience. During the onboarding of orthopedics, urology, plastics, bariatrics, and pulmonology services, I've observed how thoughtful onboarding, standardization, and shared a shared culture of continuous improvement contribute to more consistent and sustainable care delivery while improving access for our community.

I support the proposed partnership with Santiam Hospital & Clinics. It represents a meaningful investment in maintaining and strengthening local access to high-quality healthcare in our region. This collaboration will help preserve a vital rural hospital and clinic system while ensuring patients can continue to receive care close to home. It also reflects a shared commitment to compassionate, patient-focused care. I grew up in a tiny town in Eastern Washington, and I know first hand that having healthcare in your community can change lives, literally.

From an operational perspective, the partnership creates opportunities for greater efficiency through shared resources and reduced duplication while strengthening workforce stability.

Importantly, this partnership maintains local governance and leadership while supporting a stronger, more sustainable future for rural healthcare delivery. That balance is critical to preserving community trust and responsiveness.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this important decision. I strongly support the proposed partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital & Clinics.

67. 5/6/2026

Salem Health has long been a trusted healthcare provider, known for having one of the top emergency departments on the West Coast. I actually have a personal connection to the organization. I was born there 44 years ago and they've consistently demonstrated a commitment to putting patient health and experience first. Their CEO is a nurse who has provided hands-on patient care, which says a lot about the organization's values and leadership approach.

They're also one of the top employers in the state, offering competitive wages, strong benefits, and a positive workplace culture. From a business standpoint, they've been a steady presence in the community, growing responsibly and sustainably while maintaining high standards of care. In a healthcare environment that's increasingly volatile, the way Salem Health balances patient care with thoughtful growth is genuinely notable.

Overall, the Salem Health–Santiam merger makes sense.

Josh Bartosz

68. 5/6/2026

My name is Conner Nowning, and I work in Engineering department at Salem Health, where I have been part of the team for 12 years. I am writing to express my support for the partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital, and to ask that the Oregon Health Authority approve this application. Thank you!

69. 5/6/2026

I have spent 15 years working in professional coding department at Salem Health. In that time, I have come to understand that great health care is not just built at the bedside — it is built by every team across the organization working in the same direction. I am writing today because I believe the partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital is the right direction, and I want the Oregon Health Authority to hear that from someone who sees this organization from the inside. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this very important issue.

Angela McDougal

70. 5/6/2026

One of the most encouraging aspects of this partnership is its commitment to expanding access to care, particularly for rural and underserved communities. Santiam has long been a trusted provider in the Canyon, and aligning with the broader network and resources will enhance clinical capabilities, improve care condition, and support the growth of essential services close to home. I'm excited to see the future of the partnership!

Cathy Chastain

71. 5/6/2026

A partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital would be a meaningful step forward for healthcare access and stability in our region. This will strengthen services, expand access to specialists, and ensure that patients can receive high-quality care.

This kind of collaboration can also help stabilize healthcare infrastructure, support local providers, and preserve essential services that might otherwise be at risk. Our community will benefit from shared resources, improved coordination, and more consistent standards of care.

At a time when many rural hospitals across the country are struggling, this partnership represents a proactive, community-focused solution. It prioritizes patient access, continuity of care, and the long-term sustainability of healthcare in the region.

I strongly support this effort to protect and enhance care for our communities.

Kristi Gaskill

72. 5/6/2026

As a Registered Nurse at Salem Health for 23 years, I have dedicated my career to providing high-quality, compassionate care to the people of the mid-Willamette Valley and surrounding communities. I am writing today to offer my support for the Salem Health and Santiam Hospital partnership, and to ask that the Oregon Health Authority approve this important application.

Andrea Moye

73. 5/6/2026

Will this expand the insurance carriers so Salem Health can accept blue cross again.

Brooke Seitz

74. 5/7/2026

Salem Free Clinics is pleased to submit these comments in support of the proposed partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital. We write as an organization that has walked alongside the uninsured and underserved residents of Marion and Polk counties for twenty one years, and we write with a clear-eyed understanding of what access to health care means — and what its absence costs — for the people in our community who have the least margin for error.

Salem Free Clinics was founded in 2005 on a simple conviction: that quality, compassionate care should be available to everyone, regardless of their ability to pay. Today, hundreds of volunteers donate their time and expertise to provide free medical, dental and behavioral health services to the uninsured residents of this community. We do not charge our patients. And we operate, every day, at the intersection of human need and the health care system's limitations.

From that vantage point, we have an intimate understanding of what it means when the health care safety net holds — and what it looks like when it frays. We have seen patients delay care until a manageable condition becomes a crisis. We have seen families make impossible choices between a medical bill and a housing payment. We have seen what happens to people who fall through the gaps that a fragmented, under-resourced health care system inevitably creates. And we have seen, again and again, that the presence of a strong, committed hospital system in a community is not a background condition — it is the foundation on which everything else depends.

Salem Health has been that foundation for the mid-Willamette Valley. For our patients — many of whom are among the most vulnerable residents of Marion and Polk counties — Salem Health is not an abstraction. It is the emergency department that stabilizes a patient we refer. It is the specialist who sees someone we cannot adequately serve. It is the institution whose mission aligns most closely with our own: to improve the health and well-being of the people and communities we serve. That

alignment is not incidental. It is the reason our organizations have been able to work together on behalf of the patients who depend on both of us.

Salem Health's investment in West Valley Hospital and the expansion of outpatient services in Polk County — services that are rarely available in rural settings — reflects an organization that understands what it means to bring care to people where they are, rather than asking them to come to care. That same philosophy, applied to the Santiam Canyon through this partnership, represents that same kind of investment.

The people we serve at Salem Free Clinics are a daily reminder of what happens when health care infrastructure is inadequate or inaccessible. Most of our patients work, making a little too much for Medicaid, but not enough to pay for health insurance or the high out of pocket costs to see a doctor. For the uninsured and underinsured residents of the Santiam Canyon the stakes of this review are real and immediate. A partnership that stabilizes and strengthens Santiam Hospital is a partnership that protects some of the most vulnerable people in this region.

Salem Free Clinics supports this partnership because it reflects the values we hold. Health care is a shared responsibility, that no community should be left without access to quality care, and that strong organizations, working together, can do more for the people they serve than any one organization can do alone.

We respectfully ask that the Oregon Health Authority approve this application. The people of the canyon — and the safety net that serves them — are counting on it. Together, we can all make a positive impact for the health of our communities!

With appreciation,

Trina Fowler, Chief Executive Officer

Salem Free Clinics

75. 5/7/2026

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts on this merger. I have lived in Salem all of my life and have been a patient of Salem Health for just as long! Born here, receive care here, and now, I work here! I was very excited to hear about the merger with Salem Health and Santiam. Not only do I believe this will offer our community members a more seamless experience in terms of their care, but they will also keep healthcare local and accessible for them. I am also very excited to hear that

the staff of Santiam will be receiving market income rates. They do a phenomenal job taking care of their patients (I have heard from many friends and family) and they deserve a fair and equitable rate for the work they do. This will make both Santiam and Salem Health more financially sound and in a better place to be able to serve their respective communities in the best way possible. Again, thank you for giving me a time and space to share my thoughts.

Tabitha Geiger

76. 5/7/2026

I am a proud employee of Salem Health. Our organization is exceptional in caring for our community. My personal experience with Salem Health as a patient has been extremely positive. They work diligently to provide the best care and alleviate all concerns. If I have ever had any questions or concerns, they are quick to respond with answers and solutions. I would highly recommend this merger between Salem Health and Santiam, as I believe it will benefit both the communities involved.

Angela Harker

77. 5/7/2026

Hospital partnerships are essential to maintain financial sustainability in our current healthcare climate. The partnership between Salem and Santiam makes sense from a practical standpoint since many of Santiam's higher acuity patients will end up in Salem. Other patients will be able to keep care closer to home at Santiam which is important for rural healthcare.

Natalie Reed

78. 5/7/2026

As someone who currently works for Salem Health and has worked in within Santiam Hospital in the past, I believe both systems are really good at keeping the patient at the center of their focus and this partnership would strengthen their ability to care for our communities. I have witnessed firsthand the benefits that Salem Health has brought to Dallas and surrounding rural communities by fully investing in desperately needed structures, services, and equipment out at West Valley Hospital. Salem Health continues to show me, as an employee, that they care deeply about rural health and keeping care local. Further, they demonstrate genuine care and respect for people in

many ways. One example is through thoughtful problem solving initiatives that routinely engage frontline staff in working together with leaders to improve everything from the employee experience to the care we provide directly to our patients. I am in full support of this partnership.

Kimberly Bowen

79. 5/7/2026

My name is Katie Dobler. I am Vice President of Salem Health Medical Group. I am submitting this comment as a community member and lifelong advocate for local health care in the mid-Willamette Valley.

I was born at Salem Hospital in the 1970s. I left Salem after high school and spent roughly 25 years living and working across the Pacific Northwest, including 15 years in health care leadership at The Portland Clinic, an independent medical group in Portland. When I eventually made the decision to return home, it was because my family is here — the people who raised me and shaped who I am.

Before joining my current role, I watched independent medical groups struggle with a financial reality that has only grown more acute: reimbursement rates that do not keep pace with the cost of running clinics and ambulatory surgery centers. I watched colleagues in other markets face a hard choice — sell to a large national organization like Optum or another publicly traded entity, or find a way to stay local. Communities that waited too long lost the ability to choose.

The partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital represents exactly the kind of locally grounded solution that protects communities from that outcome. I am not here to advocate for my employer. I am here because I grew up in this region, I chose to come back to it and I believe every community deserves health care that is accountable to the people it serves — not to shareholders.

Outside of work, I serve as the future planning chair for Center 50+, a Salem-area organization dedicated to improving health outcomes for older adults through addressing social isolation and building an age-friendly community. The people we serve there depend on stable, accessible, local health care more than most.

I urge the Oregon Health Authority to support this partnership. This is a window. Once local health care passes to a national, publicly traded operator, communities rarely get it back.

80. 5/7/2026

The partnership between Santiam and Salem strengthens our ability to deliver high-quality, coordinated care to our communities. By working together, we expand access to specialized services, improve care transitions, and ensure patients receive the right level of care at the right time. This collaboration enhances patient safety, supports our care teams, and ultimately leads to better outcomes for the individuals and families we serve.

Tiffany Palamaris

81. 5/6/2026

Hello,

This email address was referenced in an article by the Salem Reporter regarding the Salem Health merger with Santiam Hospitals & Clinics.

I would like to add my voice to the 30,000+ voices that lost coverage when Salem Health refused negotiations with Regence BCBS and prioritized profit over their patients and make clear that I am strongly against this merger. Please do not let Salem Health continue to swallow up their competitors. If anything, Salem Health needs more competition in this community, not less. The residents here need other healthcare options from organizations that will put their patients needs and interests over their bottom lines.

Please DO NOT approve this merger and make it even harder for residents in the area to find healthcare!

Kim Stoltz, West Salem resident

82. 5/6/2026

Cheryl Nester Wolfe, President and CEO of Salem Health Hospitals and Clinics submitted a [letter](#) regarding the proposed transaction.

83. 5/7/2026

Marin Arreola, President of Advanced Economic Solutions, submitted a [letter](#) regarding the proposed transaction.

84. 5/7/2026

Santiam Hospital & Clinics submitted a [letter](#) regarding the proposed transaction.

85. 5/7/2026

My name is Jenn Fowler, and I serve as Vice President of Finance and Service Line Operations at Salem Health.

I was born at Salem Hospital, and my three children were born there too. I rely on Salem Health's primary care and specialty services, and I have turned to the Emergency Department when my family needed it most.

I am also proud to say that I have been part of this organization for 21 years, beginning as a college intern and growing into the role I hold today. That kind of longevity is not an accident. It reflects something real about this organization: a genuine, sustained commitment to the people it serves. Over more than two decades, what has kept me here is the same thing I witnessed on day one, the dedication, compassion and patient-centered focus that runs through every level of this organization.

From my vantage point in finance and service line operations, I see how that commitment translates into decisions, how resources are allocated, how services are structured and how growth is pursued. Salem Health does not grow for growth's sake. It grows to extend access, to strengthen care and to serve communities that need a trusted health care partner. That pattern is visible across more than two decades of deliberate investment. I have seen firsthand what Salem Health's commitment to West Valley Hospital has meant for Dallas and the surrounding communities, bringing stable, high-quality care to a part of our region that might otherwise have gone without. Salem Health has also responded to the needs of our growing and aging population by expanding capacity, including the addition of a 180-bed inpatient tower that ensures our community can receive care close to home when it needs it most. Perhaps what I am most proud of is the way Salem Health has repeatedly stepped in when specialty services in our region were at risk of disappearing; primary care clinics, orthopedics, plastics, urology, and others that were struggling to remain viable as independent practices. Rather than allow those services to close or force patients to travel for care they needed locally, Salem Health made the patient centered decision to bring them

into the fold. The result is that patients in Marion and Polk Counties can see a specialist without long wait times or long drives, and our community retains a depth of care it deserves.

Partnerships like this are how regional systems protect that access at a time when hospitals across the country are under enormous financial pressure. Bringing Santiam into alignment with Salem Health's resources, infrastructure and operational support creates a more sustainable path forward for the Canyon's patients, providers and workforce.

I strongly support the proposed partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital and Clinics, and I respectfully ask that the Oregon Health Authority approve this application.

Jenn Fowler

86. 5/9/2026

Hi,

I have received care at Salem Health and work there as a nurse. I appreciate the hard work they try to do to care for their patients and the community. I think it could be a really good thing to join the two organizations of Santiam & Salem Health, to streamline care for patients and keep the ownership of Santiam local. It makes the most sense logistically for Salem Health to merge with Santiam, rather than a different, outside organization, and I'm grateful we have this opportunity.

My main concern is with insurance limitations. The fact that Regence Blue Cross Blue Shield is not covered at Salem Health or at Silverton Legacy anymore is concerning. If Santiam were to join with Salem Health, we would lose the last hospital in our metro area that took those patients' insurance. I know insurance is a tricky subject on both sides, but this is becoming ridiculous, and it doesn't look to be getting better unless something changes. Costs have gone up yet insurance won't cover.

Medicare/Medicaid won't cover. Our world can't keep expecting to get the same quality care with less and less reimbursement. Patients will suffer and will be harmed unintentionally as a result if we cannot figure out how to get costs met. I don't know what the answer is, and I recognize it is not a simple solution, but having to outsource care to another metro area because of your insurance should not be a thing in a city of our size.

Other than that, I think it could be a good partnership and look forward to working with Santiam more closely, assuming a plan is developed for this issue. Thank you!

Jeanette Palominos

87. 5/9/2026

There must be careful and deliberate thoughts about this merger. When there's only 1 hospital in an area there is no competition. I know some people want it to happen others not. There has to be rules about insurance coverage. They must be forced to have arbitration if they have problems with individual companies. What has happened to Regent blue cross has happened to others only others gave in. Salem is a big company who has influence but I ask that there be rules. They must accept all insurance.

Thank you

Susan B

88. 5/10/2026

I do not support this partnership because Salem Health is attempting to become a monopoly for most of the Willamette Valley. They are considered a "nonprofit" hospital, but they just buy up property at the end of the fiscal year to spend the rest of the income they make. They already cut benefits to their employees and the quality of care continues to deteriorate under Cheryl Wolfe, CEO.

Bella W

89. 5/10/2026

I do not want to see hospitals like Santiam close, but I do not want Salem Health to continue to grow their monopoly of healthcare in the Willamette Valley. Salem Health is infamous for horrendous wait times in their ED, is currently experiencing layoffs, repeatedly changes supply manufacturers and vendors to find the cheapest option without long term consideration or appreciation for quality, and is undergoing other similar, short-sighted cost saving measures with seemingly little consideration for the community it claims to serve. Unless there is absolutely no other way to save Santiam, I am vehemently opposed to a Salem Health acquisition.

D.C.

90. 5/11/2026

I have spent 19 years working in Corporate Integrity and Risk Management at Salem Health. In that time, I have come to understand that great health care is not just built at the bedside — it is built by every team across the organization working in the same direction. I am writing today because I believe the partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital is the right direction, and I want the Oregon Health Authority to hear that from someone who sees this organization from the inside.

I work in health care administration, but every spreadsheet, every system, and every policy decision is ultimately about people caring for people. This partnership is a reminder to the Oregon Health Authority that behind every comment submitted is a community asking for investment and stability in quality care.

Running a health system sustainably requires creativity, discipline and a willingness to question every assumption. For instance, Salem Health has made and continues to make significant investments in Polk County to expand capacity to meet future needs. Prioritizing investment into care delivered locally is only possible because we are all working as a team. Folks in the Santiam Canyon deserve the kind of investment that Salem Health has made in Polk County – and this partnership will deliver exactly that.

I am asking the Oregon Health Authority to support this partnership and, in doing so, to support the thousands of people who depend on Santiam Hospital & Clinics for their care.

Sincerely,

Ellen Hampton

91. 5/11/2026

I joined Salem Health because I believed in what it stands for. The mission — to improve the health and well-being of the people and communities we serve — guided that decision, and it has shaped my work every day since. This partnership with Santiam Hospital is a natural extension of that mission into a community that deserves the same investment we have made here. I support it because it is the right thing

Jodi Luckenbill

92. 5/11/2026

Northwest Human Services supports this proposed transaction as a way to help maintain and strengthen access to healthcare in our region.

Santiam Hospital plays a critical role for people in the Santiam Canyon and surrounding rural communities. Keeping those services stable and available matters for the people we serve, especially for those who already face barriers to care.

As a provider serving patients across Marion and Polk counties, we see firsthand how gaps in the healthcare system affect our community. When services are reduced or become harder to access, patients often delay care or go without it altogether.

We believe this transition has the potential to support long-term stability, strengthen care coordination, and protect access in areas where options are limited. At the same time, it will be important to ensure that patients continue to have affordable access to care, regardless of their insurance status.

We support a thoughtful review process that keeps patient access, quality, and affordability at the center of the decision.

Collin Nelson

93. 5/12/2026

As an RN of 33 years who has worked in rural, critical access hospitals in Oregon, I know the benefits that partnership such as Salem Health/Santiam can mean for the nursing staff at Santiam Hospital. Access to shared resources, continuing education and the support of a larger health care network can make an enormous difference in the professional lives of rural nurses — and ultimately in the care their patients receive. All nurses want to be able to provide the best care to their patients and their community. Having access to education and staff support allows rural care nurses to provide amazing care to their patients and their community. As more hospitals across the country decrease services or close, hospitals in rural areas are the most impacted, leaving patients without care in their own community. Partnerships between health care organizations benefit not just patients, it benefits the caregivers who serve them. Salem Health has demonstrated a deep commitment to clinical excellence, staff support and community health. That commitment will extend to Santiam Hospital while still preserving their culture of personalized care and allowing the the community Santiam has served for years to continue to access care close to home

Thank you for the opportunity to share my viewpoint in supporting the Salem/Santiam partnership.

Patricia Shoun

94. 5/12/2026

I'm praying that this does not go thru- the fact that I can't be seen at the hospital in my local area because it is out of network with my BCBS insurance and now another location will be closed to my use as well, this is not serving the community !

Shelley Greenwood

95. 5/12/2026

I am an employee at Santiam Hospital & Clinics, and I support the proposed transaction between Santiam and Salem Health because I believe it has the potential to significantly strengthen healthcare access, quality, and long-term sustainability for our community and the broader Marion, Polk and Linn region.

As healthcare continues to evolve, smaller rural organizations face increasing challenges related to workforce shortages, rising operational costs, access to specialty care, technology investments, and reimbursement pressures. I believe this partnership would provide Santiam with the additional resources and support needed to continue delivering high-quality care while also expanding services that are currently limited or unavailable locally. This could help patients receive more comprehensive care closer to home and reduce the need to travel outside the community for specialty services.

I also believe the transaction could improve coordination of care between organizations, strengthen recruitment and retention efforts, and create greater stability for healthcare services in the region. Access to a larger network may allow for expanded specialty care, improved operational support, stronger quality initiatives, and additional opportunities for innovation and growth.

From an employee perspective, I believe the partnership may create positive opportunities through more competitive compensation and benefits, stronger health insurance offerings, enhanced retirement options, professional development opportunities, and increased career growth pathways. Being part of a larger health system may also provide additional leadership development and advancement opportunities while helping support workforce sustainability in rural healthcare.

Most importantly, I believe this transaction is about ensuring that our community continues to have access to high-quality healthcare services well into the future. Without additional support and resources, it may become increasingly difficult for smaller rural healthcare organizations to maintain and expand services at the level our patients deserve. I believe this partnership represents an opportunity to strengthen care delivery, improve access, and preserve local healthcare services for future generations while maintaining the community-focused care that Santiam is known for.

Abbie Proctor

96. 5/12/2026

I believe this merger to put at risk the many families in the Salem and Santiam canyons who have Blue Cross Blue Shield insurance that would no longer be accepted by Santiam due to the merger. IT would substantially limit health care locally. Those insured would need to seek coverage through silverton legacy or Corvallis which is no longer a local option.

Margo Williams

97. 5/12/2026

My name is Erica Puopolo. I serve as the Systems Director of Revenue Cycle at Salem Health, where I have worked for nearly nine years. I am also a lifelong Salem resident, and I am writing to express my support for the proposed partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital.

My connection to Salem Health goes well beyond my professional role — I have had the opportunity to experience its care firsthand as a patient at some very significant moments in my life. In 2023, I welcomed my daughter at the Salem Health Birth Center. As any new parent knows, the anticipation and anxiety of welcoming a little one can be overwhelming, but the care I received was simply exceptional. The team honored my wishes, kept my daughter and me safe throughout, and was both kind and knowledgeable every step of the way. As a new mother whose baby struggled with feeding, I also leaned on Salem Health's Occupational Therapy services and free lactation support group — resources that made a real difference during a difficult time for our family. Though I have regularly used routine primary care, lab, and imaging services with consistently good results, it was the compassion, support, and quality

care during my transition into motherhood that has made me so proud to be a Salem Health employee and so grateful for the role this organization plays in our community.

In my position, I see firsthand the financial and operational pressures facing health care organizations today. Workforce shortages, rising costs, and the ongoing challenge of sustaining access to quality care (especially in rural communities like the Santiam Canyon) are real and serious. The proposed partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital is a thoughtful, meaningful response to those challenges. Having seen Salem Health's commitment to our community both as an employee and as a patient, I have every confidence this is a step in the right direction.

Thank you to the Health Care Market Oversight office for the opportunity to provide comment.

Sincerely,

Erica Puopolo

98. 5/12/2026

This merger would drastically alter health care options for Santiam canyon residents that have Blue Cross health insurance as Salem Health is not/dies not have a contract with them. It would force canyon residents that rely on Santiam Hospital/ doctors to travel great distances for emergency or regular health care. This merger creates an unfair monopoly. The majority of large employers in the canyon offer Blue Cross policies to their employees. Santiam Hospital is one of the last, close options for health care. If the merger is allowed, Salem Health should be required to allow Santiam to still accept Blue Cross insurance or Salem Health should be required to resume and negotiate an active agreement with Blue Cross.

Sarah Cooper

99. 5/12/2026

My name is Anna, and I have worked at Salem Health Hospitals & Clinics for nearly 22 years. During that time, I have spent 15 years providing bedside care and the seven years working in support services. I have also personally received care at both Salem Health Hospitals & Clinics and Santiam, which gives me both a professional and personal perspective on the importance of quality local health care.

Throughout my career, I have seen firsthand the dedication, compassion, and teamwork that make Salem Health a special place to work and receive care. I have also experienced the importance of having trusted health care services available close to home, especially for rural communities. The staff at both organizations work hard every day to care for patients with dignity, respect, and professionalism.

I strongly support the partnership between Salem Health and Santiam because I believe it will strengthen access to care for our communities now and into the future. Health care organizations are facing growing challenges, including workforce shortages, financial pressures, and the increasing need for expanded rural health services. By working together and sharing resources, Salem Health and Santiam can continue providing high-quality care locally while expanding services and maintaining long-term stability for patients and families in the Canyon and surrounding communities.

I appreciate the Oregon Health Authority and the Health Care Market Oversight office for providing the opportunity for community members to share their perspectives. I fully support this partnership and believe it will help ensure strong, sustainable, community-focused health care for generations to come.

Anna Miller

100. 5/13/2026

In support affiliation.

Janic Nibler

101. 5/13/2026

I look forward to joining Salem Health as it will give Santiam the opportunity to continue to grow and to offer more services to our community. We do a great job at Santiam and with the additional tools we could gain by joining Salem we can continue to do an even better job serving our patients.

Amanda Toney

102. 5/13/2026

I am very excited about this merger. The Willamette Valley has needed greater access to providers and clinics for a long time. It has been difficult to find a doctor that is

accepting new patients. Salem Health has the revenue to open new clinics and will bring new providers to the area.

Ronda Hooper

103. 5/13/2026

To whom it may concern,

I am writing as a hospital employee in strong support of the proposed affiliation between Santiam Hospital & Clinics and Salem Health Hospitals & Clinics.

Those of us working in healthcare see every day how difficult the current environment has become for independent community hospitals and rural healthcare organizations. Staffing shortages, rising operational costs, recruitment challenges, increasing administrative burdens, and growing patient needs continue to place enormous pressure on local healthcare systems. This affiliation represents an important opportunity to strengthen and stabilize healthcare services for our patients and our community for the long term.

From my perspective as an employee, this partnership is not about losing local care. It is about preserving and improving it. Aligning with a larger local health system will help provide greater access to resources, specialty services, technology, recruitment support, and operational sustainability that smaller organizations often struggle to maintain on their own.

I understand there are concerns in the community surrounding the current insurance dispute between Salem Health and Regence Blue Cross Blue Shield. While that situation is unfortunate and understandably frustrating for impacted patients, it represents only a portion of the patients served within our broader care area and should not be the sole factor considered in a decision of this magnitude. The long-term sustainability of local healthcare access, services, staffing, and patient care must also weigh heavily in this review process.

I have also heard concerns that this affiliation could create a “monopoly.” From my perspective, the alternative is far more concerning. I would much rather see healthcare decisions remain under local leadership by an Oregon-based healthcare organization that understands our communities than risk future instability that could force

partnerships with large out-of-state or corporate healthcare systems that have little connection to the patients and communities we serve.

This affiliation has the potential to strengthen healthcare delivery across our region, improve coordination of care, expand services closer to home, and support recruitment and retention of providers and staff. Most importantly, it helps protect access to local healthcare for the future.

I believe it is important for OHA to hear directly from those of us who work inside hospitals and clinics every day. We understand firsthand the challenges facing healthcare, and many of us view this partnership as a proactive and necessary step toward preserving high-quality care in our communities.

I respectfully encourage the Oregon Health Authority to approve this affiliation. I believe it is in the best interest of patients, healthcare workers, and the long-term future of healthcare access in our region.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jaime Sampson

104. 5/13/2026

My name is Lynda Symington, and I am a Security Analyst for Salem Health. I began my career at Salem Health as a Security Officer, which gave me firsthand experience in how important safety, compassion, and teamwork are in a healthcare environment. Over the years, I have grown professionally within this organization and have seen the incredible impact Salem Health has on both employees and the communities it serves.

My connection to Salem Health is both professional and deeply personal. Working here has shown me what it means to be part of an organization that truly cares for its employees and patients. The support I have received throughout my career and the opportunities for advancement have been incredible. Salem Health feels like much more than just a workplace — it feels like a second family.

I have also personally trusted Salem Health with some of the most important moments of my life. I chose to have all five of my children here because of the exceptional care I received. When I was pregnant with my twins, it was recommended that I deliver in

Portland due to the higher risks involved. However, I trusted the providers and staff at Salem Health completely and knew there was nowhere else I wanted to go. The care, compassion, and support my babies and I received were truly amazing, and that experience strengthened my belief in this organization even further.

I believe the Salem Health and Santiam partnership is incredibly important right now. Healthcare organizations everywhere are facing significant challenges, including workforce shortages, rising costs, and maintaining access to care in rural communities. Partnerships like this are essential to ensuring patients continue to receive high-quality, compassionate care close to home.

This partnership would provide Santiam patients and the surrounding community with greater access to resources and support systems, including financial assistance programs, expanded services, and enhanced security presence. It would also help create a stronger patient experience where people feel heard, respected, and cared for during their appointments and throughout their healthcare journey.

In addition, this partnership would create opportunities for employees to work within an organization that invests in its people, encourages growth, and fosters a culture of support and compassion. Salem Health has built a workplace culture where employees are valued, and I believe bringing those values and resources to Santiam would greatly benefit both patients and staff alike.

Thank you to the Health Care Market Oversight office for the opportunity to provide input on this important matter. I strongly support the partnership between Salem Health and Santiam and believe it will strengthen healthcare access, resources, and long-term sustainability for the communities we serve.

Lynda Symington

105. 5/13/2026

I trust our administration and believe this is a positive strategy to remain an effective provider of healthcare in this world of insurance driven economics

Sean Sullivan

106. 5/13/2026

I have worked for Santiam Hospital & Clinics (Santiam Memorial Hospital) for 31 years. It has been a great place to work, and I consider it MY hospital. We have had ups and downs financially and the administration has always been up front with us; we have worked together with hiring freezes, not having pay increases, and whatever was necessary to retain our staff and not have to lay anyone off until things improved. I say this because it is important to know that Santiam cares about its employees and its community, and we do our best to provide for the needs of our community.

Unfortunately, expanding and growing our campus and our clinics, our technology and equipment, and hiring and retaining our employees including providers, technicians, nurses, Clinic staff, dietary, office staff, facilities, administration, etc., all takes money. We do all we can to evaluate where our money goes, where it needs to go, where we can cut back, and when we have to go forward in faith that doing so is the best for the future of Santiam and the community. With the continued advancement of technology costs, medical costs, the decrease in reimbursement from Insurance companies, having to write-off the balances of those claims not reimbursed, increase in charity care for our patients without insurance, it is taking a toll on our ability to thrive and continue to be independent.

One of the benefits of joining a larger medical system includes more buying power of supplies and equipment in larger quantities, receiving discounts which reduces cost. Another is, with joint efforts we can put more pressure on insurance companies to accept claims and reimburse us for the care we provide the patients. We will be able to provide more competitive salaries and benefits to hire and retain our excellent caregivers and support staff to ensure we have staff needed to care for our patients here. Salem Health has a more robust EPIC system, and other electronic systems that provide more efficient and accurate collection of data for patient care that can be shared. Salem's electronic systems also help pull data for mandatory reporting for The Joint Commission accreditation and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid services, which are presently done manually due to the cost of buying one ourselves. These reports reflect our position in Excellence in Patient Care and our Star Rating as it ensures we are following all the Standards of Care. These are just a few of the benefits.

Santam Hospital continues to see increases in patient numbers and patient needs and we want to continue to meet those needs. Yes, there will be changes and we all dislike

change. There will be adjustments, some concern about our care as patients, and concerns if we will lose our small-town feeling. Be assured that Santiam does not take your concerns lightly but are preparing for the best care we can possibly give. Please give each other grace in these times of change.

Patti Pedersen

107. 5/13/2026

How will the merger impact Santiam as a rural hospital when it comes to federal funding?

Leah Roberts

108. 5/13/2026

How with the merger between Salem and Santiam impact Santiam as a rural health hospital and federal funding?

Leah Roberts

109. 5/13/2026

I think this is a positive thing that is happening.

Martina Woodson

110. 5/13/2026

As a long-time employee of the finance department and current Director of Finance at Santiam Hospital and Clinics, I support the partnership between Santiam Hospital and Clinics and Salem Health. As a patient of Santiam, I value having increased access to Salem Health's specialists allowing patients to seek care closer to home instead of traveling out of the area. As an employee of Santiam, I see that the proposed affiliation between Salem Health and Santiam will bring more support for Santiam's employees and services. As the current and future economic pressures lower payments for services that dedicated Santiam employees provide to the Santiam Canyon, financial sustainability is called into question. These lowered payments leave very little funds to invest in equipment and aging facilities needed to continue the level of care. The proposed partnership will keep Santiam Hospital and Clinics serving the community, offering patients in the Santiam Canyon fair access to care comparable to what patients receive in Salem.

Rachael Seeder

111. 5/13/2026

I see the proposed transaction as a necessary step to support the long-term stability of Santiam Hospital and the services we provide to our community. Rural healthcare organizations are increasingly vulnerable to financial pressures, and becoming part of a larger, financially stable system like Salem Health helps ensure we can continue to serve our patients without disruption. This stability is critical not only for maintaining current services, but also for supporting our workforce and sustaining care delivery in the Santiam Canyon for years to come.

From a patient care perspective, I believe this affiliation will enhance continuity of care by improving coordination across the region and expanding access to specialty services. Many of our patients already require higher levels of care, and this partnership offers an opportunity to streamline transfers between Salem and Santiam Hospital, keep patients within a more coordinated local network, ideally reducing the need to travel to Portland for treatment. Maintaining care within the Salem region allows patients to remain closer to home and improves the ability for consistent follow-up care within their own community.

While I value Santiam Hospital's independence, I believe this is a proactive and necessary decision to protect the future of healthcare in our region. Taking this step now helps avoid more reactive decisions in the future that could limit options or impact the community negatively. Overall, I view this transaction as a strategic move to enhance patient care, strengthen continuity, and ensure lasting access to healthcare services for the Santiam Canyon.

Danny Freitag

112. 5/13/2026

I have been an employee of Santiam for 4.5 years and have truly valued the opportunity to serve in my own community. In my role, I work closely with both community partners and community members, giving me a strong understanding of local needs and opportunities.

To be transparent, when I first heard about the proposed partnership with Salem Health, I had some concerns due to negative social media coverage. However, over

the past four months, I have had the opportunity to engage directly with Cheryl Nester Wolfe during her visits to the five Santiam Service Integration Teams that I coordinate. Along with Maggie Hudson, both participated in open and productive conversations with partners and community members.

Santiam and Salem also hosted town halls in Stayton and Mill City that were well attended. While some of the topics discussed were challenging, I felt they were addressed with clarity and transparency. These interactions helped move my perspective from concern to optimism. Often, hesitation comes with change and the unknown, but open communication helped build trust and understanding.

I am excited about what this partnership could mean for Santiam and our community, as well as how we can support Salem Health. Santiam is built on community, and I would love to see a resiliency or community resource hub developed in our rural area so residents can access services locally rather than traveling to Salem.

By services, I am referring to Social Determinants of Health. This could include CPR and healthy cooking classes, education about advance directives, and access to resources including employment navigation, energy assistance, mental health services, and senior and disability support—all in one location. As a Service Integration Coordinator, I see this as a natural extension of our collaborative work, and I believe Salem Health could help make it possible.

There is also a lack of urgent care in east Marion County. Beyond Salem, there are hospitals and primary care providers, but no urgent care option. Establishing urgent care would allow many non-emergency needs to be treated appropriately, reducing strain on the emergency department and improving access for the community.

Santiam could also support Salem Health in expanding community engagement. While the CHEC Center is an incredible resource, there is an opportunity to extend service integration into areas like Woodburn and Gervais. This model has successfully brought partners together across sectors, strengthening collaboration and relationships.

I support the partnership between Santiam and Salem Health. It has the potential to provide seamless care for patients, expand services, and strengthen our organization. As one of the largest employers in east Marion County, these improvements could also positively impact our local economy.

Kim Dwyer

113. 5/13/2026

I think a merger would be nice if Santiam can stay somewhat the same and keep the "small town feeling". Patients go here to feel more like a person and not a #. If more access is made to patients needing certain treatments, then I think that is a good thing. I am hoping that healthcare costs do not skyrocket due to only 1 hospital option for most of the Willamette Valley. With all other normal everyday bills continually going up it would be horrible for people to have another large monthly cost to pay for.

Kyle Brinlee

114. 5/13/2026

I have mixed emotions about the merge with Salem Health — both excitement and nervousness. I have been both a patient and an employee at Santiam for the past 10 years, and during that time I've seen firsthand how deeply this organization cares about its patients and community.

One of the things that makes Santiam special is the family atmosphere. We work closely together, support one another, and have been through a lot together over the years. Like any family, we've faced challenges, but there has always been a strong sense of teamwork and dedication to doing what is best for our patients. My biggest concern is that with a larger organization stepping in, that family dynamic could change.

I noticed some shifts even when Samaritan was involved. At Santiam, we have always tried to focus on patient care first rather than financial numbers. Larger healthcare systems naturally have to pay closer attention to finances, and I worry about how that could impact the culture we have built here.

At the same time, I understand the reality of healthcare today. In order for small rural hospitals to survive, grow, and continue meeting the increasing healthcare needs of the community, partnerships and mergers are becoming necessary. Whether it is Salem Health or another organization in the future, I know that eventually Santiam would likely need to align with a larger healthcare system. Personally, I would rather see that partnership happen with an organization close to home that serves many of the same communities and patient populations we do.

I also recognize there could be positive changes for employees. A merger with Salem Health could potentially provide better wages, stronger health insurance benefits, and more employee resources. Currently, Santiam employees have below-standard insurance coverage, no longer receive discounts, and do not receive bonuses. Despite that, many of us stay because we truly love working for a hospital that cares and does the best it can for both patients and staff.

What makes Santiam unique is the personal connection within the organization and the community. I love knowing my coworkers personally, and I love that so many of us are recognized throughout the community we serve. Seeing so many patients and community members attend the public forums has honestly been amazing. It really speaks to the important role Santiam plays in this community and how much people value this hospital."

Jessica Gower

115. 5/13/2026

I believe blocking this transaction could ultimately harm the people of the Santiam Canyon and surrounding rural communities. I have worked at Santiam Hospital for 23 years and have remained committed through many challenges and periods of uncertainty. From my perspective, I do not think the public fully understands what the alternative may look like if this partnership does not move forward, especially for a small rural healthcare organization facing ongoing financial, workforce, and access challenges.

One of Santiam's greatest strengths has always been its culture of compassion and close connection with the community. Patients here are not treated like numbers — they are known by name, face, and family. I understand some community members may worry that becoming part of a larger health system could change that culture. However, I am hopeful that instead of Salem Health changing who we are, Santiam's culture and strong community-centered values will positively influence the larger organization as well.

From what has been shared publicly, Salem Health has committed to investing millions of dollars back into this community to strengthen and expand healthcare services in the Canyon and surrounding service areas. I believe this investment has the potential to improve access to specialty care, increase local services, strengthen emergency

and primary care resources, improve technology and electronic medical record systems, and reduce the need for rural patients to travel long distances for care. These are services and resources our community has needed for many years.

As an employee involved in clinic operations and quality, I have personally experienced the challenges of recruiting and retaining healthcare workers in a rural community when competing against larger systems with stronger wages and benefits. Staffing shortages remain one of the greatest barriers to improving access, expanding services, reducing wait times, and strengthening quality healthcare. I believe this partnership has the potential to strengthen the local workforce, create additional healthcare-related jobs within the region, and help attract highly qualified providers and support staff to rural communities that have historically struggled with recruitment.

I also believe current employees may benefit from expanded educational opportunities, stronger career pathways, leadership development, and the ability to participate in larger system-wide initiatives and specialized roles that are difficult to offer within a small rural organization. In my area of quality and compliance, I am especially hopeful to see expanded support and emphasis on quality improvement, patient safety, and innovation. This partnership should bring additional community outreach resources and expanded mental health services to a region that continues to face significant economic, behavioral health, and access-to-care challenges. Increased support programs, prevention efforts, and behavioral health resources will have a meaningful impact on the long-term health and wellbeing of our community.

Overall, I believe this transaction represents an opportunity to strengthen rural healthcare, invest in the future of this community, improve access and services for patients, and create greater opportunities for both current and future healthcare workers while preserving the compassionate culture that makes Santiam unique.

Harmoney Forbes

116. 5/13/2026

I strongly support the merger between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital. Current healthcare complexities, including the reduction in reimbursement from private insurance contracts and the reduction in Federal funding make economies of scale a necessary strategic move. Without the protection and support of a larger hospital,

Santiam and other small community hospitals are at risk of being unable to robustly serve their communities.

Santiam, as a US News and World Report five-star hospital, and a precious, revered member of the Stayton community, will stay under its talented local leadership and will continue to provide exceptional care. Joining Salem Health will also provide not only continuity of care for patients but the sharing of the medical record will ensure the care continuum is seamless and robust. There are many positive reasons to support this merger.

Andrea Kamenca

117. 5/13/2026

Small hospitals cannot provide the same level of service or access to specialty services. Across the country, small independent hospitals are closing their doors. There is no benefit to keep Salem Health from expanding if it means Santiam does not have a hospital

Jason

118. 5/13/2026

I am an employee at Santiam Hospital, and I have a family member who has worked at Salem Hospital for over 10 years. The two biggest issues that are important to me are quality of care and a financially sound hospital. This affiliation addresses both of those issues. Nurses and doctors are in high demand and being able to continually pay competitive wages and keep our team members is improved by having a strong partner (Salem Hospital). The hope is we will be able to share our resources across all locations to continue to provide quality care to all our friends and neighbors in the Santiam Canyon as well as mid-Willamette valley. Second, the affiliation with Salem Hospital will ensure that Santiam Hospital will continue to grow in services provided, excellent care to its patients and that our friends and neighbors in the Santiam Canyon will have a long-term solution for health care in their local area. I understand that change is very disruptive and can cause uncertainty, however, in my opinion, not moving forward with this affiliation with Salem Hospital could jeopardize the long-term local hospital and clinics in the Santiam Canyon.

Tom Ruddiman

119. 5/13/2026

Thank you for the opportunity to share input on the proposed transaction between Salem Health Hospitals and Clinics and Santiam Hospital and Clinics.

As both an employee and a patient in this health system, I'm supportive of this transaction and feel genuinely optimistic about what it means for our community.

I was born at Salem Hospital. I've worked here for more than 15 years. When people ask me where to go for care, I recommend Salem Health without hesitation. That's not just professional loyalty, it's personal. The people I work with understand that our patients are our neighbors, our family members, ourselves. That perspective shapes everything from how we solve problems to how we show up every day.

From a patient standpoint, I believe this transaction meaningfully improves access to care. Santiam becoming part of a larger, local health system means more people can get what they need closer to home. I also expect it will help reduce emergency room wait times, as more community members choose Santiam's emergency department rather than traveling further for care. And being on one medical record across the system is a big deal. It means faster, safer, more connected care for everyone.

Santiam gains access to resources and support that are hard to sustain independently, and being part of a larger system helps protect those services long term. I've seen what strong leadership, a Lean culture and a real commitment to quality can do. I want that for Santiam's community too. And this isn't a one-way street. Santiam has deep roots in Stayton and the surrounding community. The trust and loyalty their patients have for that hospital is something Salem Health genuinely benefits from and should honor. Bringing these two organizations together means combining that community connection with the resources and infrastructure to sustain it for the long term.

I'm proud to work for an organization that takes this kind of step. The communities we serve deserve connected, accessible, high-quality health care, and I believe this transaction moves us meaningfully in that direction. I hope OHA will support it.

Amber Aguinaga

120. 5/14/2026

I urge you to deny this merger/purchase. As a Regence insurance holder, I can no longer use Salem Health facilities with my insurance. Salem Health's purchase of

Willamette Urology has already eliminated a provider for me and I have not been able to yet replace this provider. I cannot use Salem Hospital with my insurance. I have numerous coworkers that live east of Stayton that utilize the facility in Stayton and would then be unable to use their insurance coverage there. Salem Health has severely limited our health care options in the greater Salem area, their acquisition of yet another major health care facility would be a significant blow to healthcare access for thousands of people in the Salem area. At the very least, a requirement to once again accept Regence insurance should be written into any approval of this transaction. Thank you.

Ron Wright

121. 5/14/2026

This partnership will benefit the community in which Santiam Hospital serves without compromising the reason why patients and employees come here. The ability to have a resource to build up services for patients and employees will also benefit the community and Santiam can continue to serve their community in the future through this turbulent health care environment.

Cathy Melero

122. 5/14/2026

As an employee, patient, and community member of the Santiam Canyon, I support the partnership with Salem Health. I believe this partnership will help increase staff wages, which may reduce the loss of employees to higher-paying positions in the city. It also has the potential to expand our facilities and improve access to care for our growing canyon communities.

In addition, this partnership could provide access to specialty resources and services that we currently do not have locally, reducing the need for patients to travel long distances for care. As both a healthcare employee and patient, I see this as an opportunity to strengthen and sustain healthcare services in our community for the future. Without this partnership, I worry about where our healthcare system and community access to care may be headed for the patients of our community.

Sinnamee Baney

123. 5/14/2026

I'm pretty excited about Santiam joining Salem Health!

Kendahl Fontanini

124. 5/14/2026

I am writing in support of the proposed partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital. This partnership represents an important opportunity to strengthen access to high-quality healthcare for our rural communities.

Santiam Hospital plays a vital role in serving its region, and alignment with a larger, well-resourced health system like Salem Health can help ensure its long-term sustainability. By expanding access to specialty services, clinical expertise, and infrastructure, this merger has the potential to enhance patient care while preserving local access.

In today's healthcare environment, smaller hospitals face increasing challenges related to staffing, financial pressures, and resource limitations. A collaborative approach like this can help stabilize services, improve care coordination, and support continued access to essential and emergency healthcare close to home.

Most importantly, this partnership can help ensure that patients in the Santiam region continue to receive timely, high-quality care both now and in the future.

I support this merger as a proactive step toward maintaining and strengthening healthcare access in our community.

Sarah Daniels

125. 5/15/2026

I'm excited and hopeful about the upcoming partnership between Salem and Santiam. Having worked at both locations, I believe they will both benefit from this collaboration. Santiam provides care to a large rural population, and without them, Salem would have to carry a much greater burden of care.

This partnership will allow Santiam to offer more competitive wages and health benefits while continuing to provide the high-quality care they are known for.

Lisa Lockman

126. 5/15/2026

My name is Melissa Humphrey and I currently serve as the Case Management Manager at Santiam Hospital & Clinics, President-Elect for the Oregon Chapter of the American Case Management Association, & an LPN-to-RN apprentice student through Chemeketa. I have worked at Santiam Hospital since 2022, but my connection to this community goes far beyond my career. I grew up in these small rural communities & am now raising my family here. My passion for CM & community health comes from both my professional & lived experience. I was raised in an unstable home by parents who did the best they could with the skills & resources they had. Much of my life has been shaped by learning how deeply social barriers influence health, stability, & access to care. Those experiences shaped the nurse & leader I am today & continue to fuel my passion for advocating for patients navigating an increasingly complex healthcare system. Working in rural healthcare has shown me how quickly patients can fall through the cracks when access to care becomes too difficult. Many of the patients we serve throughout the canyon are older adults, have limited health literacy, lack transportation, or feel overwhelmed navigating the healthcare system. We also care for patients who have avoided medical care for years & often arrive at the hospital extremely ill & without support. One of the things I value most about Santiam is how tightly woven we are into the community. We know our patients beyond their diagnoses & understand the realities they are facing because many of us live those same realities ourselves. I can honestly say I work alongside some of the most compassionate, hardworking, and community-driven people I have ever met. That community-centered approach is one of the reasons I believe this partnership has the potential to be so impactful. From a CM perspective, one of the greatest opportunities in partnering with Salem Health is strengthening care coordination for patients with complex medical & social needs. Healthcare is incredibly fragmented especially for rural patients who require specialty services outside of their local community. Within our own system, our inpatient care management team works closely with our CHW & Service Integration team to ensure patient needs do not stop at discharge. Together, we help connect patients to resources, support services, and follow-up care when additional help is needed, extending care beyond the hospital walls. Strengthening coordination between systems would build on this foundation and further reduce the burden on patients to navigate care alone. This partnership could also significantly improve access to specialty care closer to home. Expanding specialty access through coordinated services or future satellite clinics on the Santiam campus could reduce barriers to care & improve long-term health outcomes for our community. I understand

why some people are concerned about local healthcare consolidation, & those concerns are valid & deserve thoughtful discussion. However, I also think people may be missing one of the most important aspects of this partnership: strengthening our community! Santiam Hospital will still be Santiam Hospital. This community is not losing the organization it knows and trusts. What this partnership offers is the opportunity for stronger infrastructure, expanded clinical resources, & long-term sustainability for healthcare in a rural area that deeply needs continued investment. I want our community members to have access to high-quality care while still being able to receive support close to home from people who genuinely care about them. I am deeply passionate about care management because I have seen how easy it is for patients to get lost in complicated healthcare systems when no one is helping connect the pieces. I believe this partnership has the potential to strengthen healthcare access for the Santiam Canyon while preserving the heart of what makes our hospital so special.

127. 5/15/2026

I am both an employee and a patient of Salem Health. Before moving my care to Salem Health, I struggled with misdiagnosis and lack of treatment for a serious condition. I was relieved to find that my physicians at Salem Health took a true team approach.

That collaboration led to an accurate diagnosis and major surgery. Throughout the process, my questions were answered, and my doctors addressed my concerns with empathy. Treatment was completely successful, for which I am deeply grateful.

During my hospital stay, I was amazed by the work of nurses, CNAs, therapists, specialists and technicians — all working as a team, with me and other patients as the central focus of every decision - every action. I can't thank these caregivers enough for their dedication, their willingness to push me toward recovery, and the fact that they show up and do it again every single day.

Salem Health is people caring for people. Lives are saved and changed for the better here every day by people who are your neighbors and the person you see at the grocery store. Salem Health's partnership with Santiam brings these two groups of dedicated people together to stabilize care and, where possible, increase access and quality. I support this partnership and urge the HCMO staff to take into consideration

the challenges the state and health care providers and complete their work in a timely fashion.

Ruth Miles

128. 5/16/2026

We have often chosen to go to Santiam Hospital's ER or lab or imaging department simply because they are more efficient and more personable. If Santiam merges with salem, we wont have those options. We live in a small town because we like the atmosphere and the relationships. So having a HUGE Hospital complex is not the atmosphere we would choose, if we could. But living in Oregon, we rarely get to choose anything when it comes to government... the big city, big government, big companies always get their way. Santiam Hospital's merger would take away many of our choices because we would be forced to change our BCBS insurance (now NOBODY will accept it). I'm just disappointed.

Lissa Bales

129. 5/16/2026

To the Oregon Health Authority Health Care Market Oversight Program:

My name is Amie Wittenberg, and I serve as Vice President of Clinical Operations at Salem Health Hospitals and Clinics. I am a registered nurse with 33 years of experience, as well as a lifelong resident of the Salem community. I was born here, raised here, and have chosen to raise my own family here. Salem Health has been part of my life not just professionally, but personally as the place where my loved ones have received care during some of the most important and vulnerable moments of our lives. I have sat in those waiting rooms as a family member, not a clinician, and I have felt what it means to have a trusted, high-quality health care system close to home.

Santiam Hospital serves the communities of the Santiam Canyon and surrounding areas. These are communities that are geographically isolated, that face real barriers to accessing care elsewhere, and that depend on their local hospital not just for convenience, but for survival. The financial pressures facing rural and community hospitals across this country are severe and well documented. Santiam is not immune to those pressures. Without a sustainable path forward, the risk is not merely reduced

services, but it is the loss of a facility that many patients in that region have no realistic alternative to.

The question before the Oregon Health Authority is not whether Santiam faces those pressures, but what kind of future its patients and community deserve. I believe the answer is a future in which Santiam remains a local, nonprofit, community-anchored institution, not one absorbed by a distant, for-profit corporate system with no roots in the Canyon and no accountability to the people who live there.

Salem Health's track record gives me confidence that this partnership would deliver exactly that. I have watched this organization, over many years, make deliberate and patient-centered decisions about how and where to grow. I have seen its commitment to West Valley Hospital and what sustained local investment has meant for the Dallas community. I have seen it step in when specialty services were at risk of disappearing from Marion and Polk Counties, such as primary care, orthopedics, urology and others. This was not to expand for expansion's sake, but because patients needed those services and no one else was going to provide them. That is not a corporate growth strategy. That is a community health strategy.

Bringing Santiam into alignment with Salem Health's resources, infrastructure and operational expertise creates a more sustainable and more accountable path forward for Canyon-area patients, providers and the workforce that has dedicated itself to serving that community. It keeps decision-making local. It preserves their nonprofit mission. And it ensures that patients in Stayton, Gates, Mill City and the broader Canyon region retain access to the care they deserve without being forced to travel distances that are, for many of them, simply not feasible.

As a nurse, I have spent my career advocating for patients, particularly those whose access to care is fragile. As a community member, I have personally relied on the strength of our local health care system. Both of those perspectives lead me to the same place: this partnership is right for the Canyon, right for the region and right for Oregon's goals of expanded access, health equity and sustainable community-based care.

I strongly support the proposed affiliation between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital and Clinics, and I respectfully urge the Oregon Health Authority to approve this application.

Amie Wittenberg

130. 5/17/2026

I am opposed to the merger of Salem Health and Santiam Hospital as it will create a medical monopoly in the area. Additionally it will force the many people whose insurance Salem Hospital does not accept to go even further away from home to access medical care. The fact that a city the size of Salem has only one hospital is a problem in itself, and many people given insurance demands, have used Santiam as a (somewhat) local alternative.

Jean Waring

131. 5/17/2026

When health care is accessible, consistent, and built on trust, entire communities become stronger. Families experience more stability, children receive better support, and people are more likely to seek care early instead of waiting until situations become urgent. These outcomes depend greatly on how well local health systems are connected and how easily patients can navigate them.

I support the proposed affiliation between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital. From a community perspective, this feels like a constructive step toward strengthening local health care rather than keeping services fragmented. When health systems work more closely together, it becomes easier for patients to receive coordinated, timely, and reliable care.

What matters most to families is often very practical, but deeply important in daily life: being able to schedule appointments without long delays, having access to providers who understand their history, and knowing that emergency services are available close to home when needed. When these basics are in place, trust in the health system grows naturally, and care becomes more accessible and less stressful to navigate.

In many communities I am familiar with, especially among Latino and immigrant families, there are real and ongoing barriers that affect access to care. Language differences, transportation challenges, and uncertainty about how to navigate services can all contribute to delays in receiving care. These challenges do not reflect lack of interest in care, but rather the difficulty of accessing systems that can feel complex or

disconnected. A more integrated health system has the potential to reduce these gaps and make care feel more approachable, consistent, and supportive.

There is also real value in strengthening local services while expanding the resources available to patients. Efforts to grow and improve services in the Santiam area reflect a meaningful commitment to keeping care close to the community while increasing the system's ability to respond to evolving needs over time.

Equally important is ensuring that care continues to be delivered in a way that is respectful, inclusive, and culturally aware. Trust in health care is built not only through clinical services, but also through communication, understanding, and how people feel when they seek care. Families should feel welcomed and supported, regardless of language, background, or familiarity with the system.

Overall, I view this affiliation as a positive and constructive development that has the potential to improve coordination between providers, strengthen local health services, and support more reliable and accessible care for the communities that depend on them most.

Luis Mayorga

132. 5/17/2026

To the Health Care Market Oversight Office:

My name is Sarah Horn, and I serve as the Senior Vice President, Chief Nursing and Clinical Operations Officer at Salem Health Hospitals and Clinics. I am writing in strong support of the proposed partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital.

I have spent nearly 30 years at Salem Health, and in many ways, I have grown up here professionally. I became a nurse and a leader within this organization, shaped by its values, its people, and its deep commitment to the communities we serve. It is a true honor to lead nursing care for our region, and I do not use that word lightly. That honor extends beyond the walls of our facilities, and a partnership with Santiam deepens it. When patients can move seamlessly between organizations, with shared records, coordinated care teams, and a connected continuum of support, we are not just expanding access, we are elevating the quality of care across every community we collectively serve. This kind of integration does not diminish what either organization is; it makes both better.

Every day, I am reminded that healthcare is not a service, it is a relationship. We are caring for our neighbors, our families, our friends, and one another. This is not lost on the nurses and clinical staff who show up with that same sense of purpose. Partnering with Santiam means extending that relationship further into the canyon communities we have long served alongside, ensuring that more neighbors, more families, and more friends have access to care that feels personal, coordinated, and close to home.

The proposed partnership with Santiam Hospital matters because the challenges facing health care today are real and they are pressing. Workforce pressures, rural access to care, and financial sustainability are not distant concerns; they are the daily realities our teams navigate. Small, independent rural hospitals like Santiam face these pressures acutely and often without the infrastructure, resources, or scale to address them alone. From my vantage point leading nursing and clinical operations, I see this directly in the challenges of recruiting and retaining skilled clinical staff in rural communities. A partnership with Salem Health offers Santiam access to that support, while preserving its vital role in serving the communities of the upper mid-Willamette Valley.

We have seen this work before. Salem Health's partnership with West Valley Hospital in Dallas is the clearest evidence of what thoughtful collaboration can accomplish. That partnership expanded bed capacity, brought new specialty services to the Dallas community, and strengthened local access to care in ways that would not have been possible for a small rural hospital operating independently. The Santiam community deserves that same level of investment, and I am confident this partnership will deliver it.

Equally important is what this partnership preserves. Salem Health is a locally governed, nonprofit organization, and that distinction is worth protecting. It sets us apart in ways that directly benefit the people we serve. Decisions are made by people who live and work in this region, with the mission of serving this community. At a time when health care across the country is increasingly controlled by large national systems and private equity, keeping that governance local is critical. It is the foundation on which everything else depends.

I am grateful to the Health Care Market Oversight office for the opportunity to provide input on this important matter. As someone who has dedicated her career to this organization and these communities, I offer my full and enthusiastic support for this

partnership. I believe deeply that it represents a meaningful and necessary step forward for patients, caregivers, and communities across our region.

Respectfully,

Sarah Horn, RN

133. 5/18/2026

I appreciate the OHA's extended review of the Salem Health/Santiam transaction. I am unaffiliated with either organization and opposed to the further consolidation of the market within Salem Health. Based on Salem Health severing the contractual relationship with Blue Cross, my family had to seek both hospital and orthopedic care one hour from our home. I have witnessed anti competitive practices in the cardiology space. The continued dominance of Salem Health compromises choice and potentially reduces access to care. I do not believe the administrative savings will be ultimately passed on to the community. Thank you.

Robert Magnuson

134. 5/18/2026

In order to sustain a Health Care System, it must support and strengthen one another in these changing times. Rural Healthcare is being lost in the changes being made to insurance behaviors, government changes to Health Care. The proposal makes sense in my mind for that care to continue in our area.

Carla Eagles

135. 5/18/2026

As a member of this community, I believe many residents are not opposed to improving access to healthcare or supporting high-quality medical services. What concerns many of us is the potential impact on the future of our small towns and rural way of life.

Communities like Stayton, Sublimity, and surrounding rural areas were built on strong community values, agriculture, safety, and the ability for families to live and work without the pressures that often come with large-scale expansion. While growth is often presented as progress, growth without careful planning can come at a high cost. Concerns about increased traffic, strained infrastructure, housing pressures, longer

wait times for care, and the potential loss of the close-knit rural identity that makes this area unique. Many farming families are also concerned about what future expansion and development could mean for agricultural land and for multigenerational family farms already under pressure.

This merger is not simply about healthcare; our community seeks to protect the character, safety, and long-term sustainability of our community. Rural communities deserve a voice in decisions that will permanently shape their future. Before major changes move forward, the public deserves clear answers, transparency, and honest discussion about both the benefits and the risks of this merger.

Erica Hendricks

136. 5/18/2026

- Oregon-based, rather than bringing in an out-of-state corporate healthcare company. Preserving local governance
- Integrated Electronic Health Record. Santiam is not large enough to have Epic on our own.
- Keeping rural healthcare at Santiam with the ability to access larger Salem hospital.
- Keep expanded medical services closer to home
- Better use of hospital capacity
- Local emergency department
- Local Family Birthing Center
- Shared resources and staffing support
- Longstanding collaboration already exists
- Improve coordination of patient transfers, records, and specialty referrals.
- Long-term financial stability for all employees and all three Hospitals.
- Makes hospital system large enough to keep insurance companies in check.
- Allows infrastructure of all hospitals to improve.

-Financial stability keeps healthcare viable long into the future

Paul Hartmann

137. 5/18/2026

Of course, the unknowns are difficult to swallow. Our little community isn't so little anymore. We are literally years away from knocking on the doors of Salem and our surrounding neighbors. Growth is happening right before our eyes, and I feel it is vital for the health of our communities to band together to accommodate that growth.

Patients are having to drive to Salem or even farther for certain studies, and the wait times to get in can stretch for months. Our health cannot always wait that long. With inflation and limited services, people are being forced to make difficult decisions: putting \$100 in the gas tank to travel 30+ miles to an appointment, or putting food on the table, paying utilities, or covering prescription costs.

These are stressors I hope we can eliminate—or at least soften—for the well-being of our communities. I am very optimistic that we are going to see amazing and exciting things coming our way.

Jodi Leimbach

138. 5/18/2026

This I think this partnership will better support our community at large.

Jared Montgomery

139. 5/18/2026

Are we expecting a huge transfer/higher demand from Salem patients to our Santiam Clinics regarding appointments or establishing new providers?

Halle Instenes

140. 5//2026

141. 5/14/2026

I am a resident of Sublimity. I am reaching out to voice my strong opposition to the proposed merger between Salem health and Santiam hospital and clinics. Salem health refused to settle with Blue cross. There are a lot of residents that have blue

cross. This merger would force us to drive to Portland or Corvallis for care. That is unacceptable! No merger is a good deal for the residents of Sublimity.

Martin Oliverson

142. 5/15/2026

The Santiam Hospital & Clinics Board of Directors submitted a [letter of support](#) regarding the proposed transaction.

143. 5/15/2026

Representative Andersen submitted a [letter](#) regarding the proposed transaction.

144. 5/15/2026

Hi there!

My name is Melissa Humphrey, LPN, and I currently serve as the Case Management Manager at Santiam Hospital & Clinics, President-Elect for the Oregon Chapter of the American Case Management Association, and an LPN-to-RN apprentice student through Chemeketa Community College in partnership with Santiam Hospital. I have worked at Santiam Hospital since April 2022, but my connection to this community goes far beyond my career.

I grew up in these small rural communities and am now raising my family here. My passion for care management and community health comes from both my professional and lived experience. I was raised in an unstable home by parents who did the best they could with the skills and resources they had. Much of my life has been shaped by learning how deeply social barriers influence health, stability, and access to care. Those experiences shaped the nurse and leader I am today and continue to fuel my passion for advocating for patients navigating an increasingly complex healthcare system.

Working in rural healthcare has shown me how quickly patients can fall through the cracks when access to care becomes too difficult. Many of the patients we serve throughout the canyon are older adults, have limited health literacy, lack transportation, or feel overwhelmed navigating the healthcare system. We also care for patients who have avoided medical care for years and often arrive at the hospital

extremely ill and without support. These are not isolated situations; they are realities we see every day in rural healthcare.

One of the things I value most about Santiam Hospital & Clinics is how tightly woven we are into the community. We know our patients beyond their diagnoses, and we understand the realities they are facing because many of us live those same realities ourselves. I can honestly say I work alongside some of the most compassionate, hardworking, and community-driven people I have ever met. That community-centered approach is one of the reasons I believe this partnership has the potential to be so impactful.

From a care management perspective, one of the greatest opportunities in partnering with Salem Health is strengthening care coordination for patients with complex medical and social needs. Healthcare is incredibly fragmented, especially for rural patients who require specialty services outside of their local community. Within our own system, our inpatient care management team works closely with our Community Health Workers and Service Integration team to ensure patient needs do not stop at discharge. Together, we help connect patients to resources, support services, and follow-up care when additional help is needed, extending care beyond the hospital walls. Strengthening coordination between systems would build on this foundation and further reduce the burden on patients to navigate care alone.

This partnership could also significantly improve access to specialty care closer to home. Expanding specialty access through coordinated services or future satellite clinics on the Santiam campus could reduce barriers to care and improve long-term health outcomes for our community.

I understand why some people are concerned about local healthcare consolidation, and those concerns are valid and deserve thoughtful discussion. However, I also think people may be missing one of the most important aspects of this partnership: strengthening our community. Santiam Hospital will still be Santiam Hospital. This community is not losing the organization it knows and trusts. What this partnership offers is the opportunity for stronger infrastructure, expanded clinical resources, and long-term sustainability for healthcare in a rural area that deeply needs continued investment.

I want our community members to have access to high-quality care while still being able to receive support close to home from people who genuinely care about them. I am deeply passionate about care management because I have seen how easy it is for patients to get lost in complicated healthcare systems when no one is helping connect the pieces. Some of the most important work in healthcare happens behind the scenes with coordinating care, advocating for patients, and making sure people do not have to face difficult situations alone. I believe this partnership has the potential to strengthen healthcare access for the Santiam Canyon while preserving the heart of what makes our hospital so special.

Thank you,

Melissa Humphrey, LPN

145. 5/15/2026

Hi my name is Sabrina Martinez and I'm calling in regards to the proposed merger of Salem health and Santiam hospitals and clinics my concern would be that most of Jeld-Wen 's employees have Blue Cross Blue shield which I believe last year we lost the ability to. Go to Salem health clinics with our. Insurance so most of our pay our most of gentlemen's employees and all of their families have now had to switch to stadium hospitals and clinics to have healthcare within their general area without having to travel more than 30 miles which would only leave Albany as an alternate. Or sublimity or I'm sorry not sublimity Silverton as alternates. If Salem if Santiam becomes Salem health then we will have nowhere in the Canyon to go to seek health care options I find that extremely troubling.

146. 5/17/2026

Kathleen Bonney submitted a [letter](#) regarding the proposed transaction.

147. 5/17/2026

Comment Rescinded.

148. 5/18/2026

To Whom It May Concern:

As a physician in the Santiam Hospital and clinic system, I am looking forward to the merge with Salem Hospital.

This is a great opportunity to pool our resources, increase care to patients, and gain an advantage for our patients.

Please assist us in improving our care to an ever growing population.

Sincerely,

Lynn Gower, DO

Santiam Medical Clinic

149. 5/18/2026

My name is Carolyn Nunn I live in style Oregon. We have been using the facilities and Santiam hospital for years. I am against merging with Salem health. They do not take our insurance I'm worried about what will happen in our future and a lot of other peoples future who have Blue Cross Blue shield. And then they merge with Salem health I don't like the monopoly that's going on in our hospitals. Keep this small. That's my opinion and not just mine thank you goodbye.

150. 5/18/2026

To whom it may concern,

As a members of the medical staff at Santiam hospital we support the proposed affiliation between Santiam Hospital & clinics and Salem Health.

We believe that this affiliation will provide the greatest opportunity for continued financial stability and access of care for our community.

Though healthy and vibrant Santiam Hospital is a small hospital in an increasingly complex and competitive industry. Future trends clearly do not favor small independent hospitals when costs are rising fast and payments are declining with a forecast to get worse.

Salem Health is known to us, culturally similar, has a long stable track record, and is locally governed. We feel that any concerns about choice or competition for the community are diminished by the reality that most of the choices, or lack there of, in health care are being driven by the payers not the health care systems. Further financial viability will assure that more providers are able to see more patients and that is the real limitation at this moment.

Sincerely

Steve Vets, DO, Emergency Medicine, Santiam Hospital and clinics

Tanie Hotan, MD, Family Medicine, Santiam Hospital and clinics

Fahad Jamil, MD, Inpatient Medicine, Santiam Hospital and clinics

151. 5/18/2026

I think the partnership between Salem Health and Santiam will be a great resource for the community. This will hopefully also provide closer healthcare coverage and quality care options for those who are employed with the two parties involved but do not live within the immediate area, which is much needed!

Kagen Harrison

152. 5/18/2026

I think OHA should look at Congresses' decision to block the Spirit/JetBlue airline merger as parallel decision. The government overreach caused the loss of 17,000 jobs, key travel routes for rural customers, and the loss of jobs in the communities that Spirit Airline served. This merger will strengthened Santiam's financial position, allow for an accelerated infusion of capital, create career growth opportunities for Santiam's staff, add service lines for Santiam patients, and simplify MyChart for a seamless patient experience. As a former corporate M&A leader, the key is culture. Salem Health should find ways to embrace the Santiam Difference. This will ensure the retention of key employees through the transition. This is a win for Santiam Hospital & Clinics financially, a win for its staff, and a major win for its patients. To not support this merger would be a major folly with long term ramifications.

Eric K. Pritchard

153. 5/18/2026

I am a life-long member of the community and as a nurse, I deeply care about the services and care that patients receive in any location. I have worked for Salem Health for over 30 years, and I believe merging with Santiam Hospital can significantly benefit the community by preserving local access to essential healthcare services while strengthening financial stability and operational resources for Santiam. By partnering with a trusted regional organization rather than allowing any future potential of an

acquisition by a large out-of-state corporation, the community would retain greater local influence over decision-making, ensuring that care remains aligned with the unique needs and values of our residents. Such a merger can expand service offerings, improve staffing and technology, and reduce the risk of things unknown, by partnering with Salem Health, who is known for our commitment to our community's well-being.

Dana Hawkes

154. 5/18/2026

My name is Louis McAllister, LPN. I have 25 years of acute care experience and have worked specifically at Santiam Memorial since October 2002 — nearly 23 years in this building, serving this community. I currently work in wound care and IV infusion, hold an IV infusion certification, and am actively pursuing my Wound Care Certified credential. I am submitting this comment as both a long-tenured frontline clinical employee and a patient in this community.

I support this merger.

I want to be honest about why. Benefits at Santiam have already been cut and phased out in the period leading up to this transaction. That is not an argument against the merger — it is precisely the argument for it. What I have watched happen reflects the financial reality facing independent rural hospitals everywhere. This is not mismanagement. It is math.

I have read the opposition comments. The BCBS concern is real and OHA should attach enforceable conditions protecting current payer relationships through a defined transition period. That is a legitimate ask. But blocking this merger does not solve the BCBS problem — it just leaves Santiam to decline alone.

The West Valley Hospital precedent matters here. Salem Health expanded bed capacity, added wound care, infusion, and orthopedic rehabilitation to Dallas. That is exactly what Santiam needs and cannot fund independently.

I have spent 25 years watching what happens to facilities that try to survive alone in this environment. The staff at Santiam are talented and deeply committed to this community. They deserve the institutional backing to keep doing this work. So do the patients who depend on them.

Approve this merger with appropriate conditions. The alternative is worse.

Louis McAllister, LPN

Santiam Memorial Wound Care and Infusion Clinic

155. 5/18/2026

I have spent more than 18 years in community health care — eight at Silverton Health and more than 10 at Salem Health — and that experience shapes everything I believe about this partnership.

I know the strengths of community hospitals firsthand. I also know their financial realities.

What's important to understand is that Salem Health did not seek out Santiam Hospital. Santiam came to Salem Health — because hospitals across Oregon and the country are facing extraordinary pressures, and Santiam's leadership was looking for a partner they could trust. That matters.

This partnership would allow both organizations to do more for the communities they serve. Patients in the Santiam Canyon who currently drive to Portland for specialty care could receive that care closer to home. Shared supply contracts and operational resources would reduce costs for both systems — savings that can be reinvested in patient care. Santiam would gain access to Salem Health's expertise, staffing support and capital — while bringing something equally valuable in return.

Because community hospitals carry a kind of institutional knowledge that larger systems can lose over time. The nurse who went to school with your siblings. The physician who has cared for his high school English teacher for decades. The front desk team member who walks you to your car because she can tell you need it. That is not a small thing. That is health care at its most human, and it is exactly what Salem Health wants to preserve and learn from — not absorb and erase.

If this partnership is not approved, Santiam may have no choice but to seek affiliation with an out-of-state health system — as we have already seen happen with Samaritan Health Services and MultiCare. An out-of-state system may not prioritize Regis High School sports physicals, or contribute money and resources to the Fun Run, or invest in additional specialty care in Sublimity. Salem Health will.

Salem Health is large in size and reputation, but it remains deeply committed to the communities it serves — not just Salem, but the entire region. As someone personally working to ensure the highest quality surgical care for patients across that region, I am asking you to approve this merger. These two organizations are stronger together, and the communities they serve deserve nothing less.

Amber Shambaugh

156. 5/19/2026

As an employee of Salem Health and a resident of Stayton, Oregon I do share the common concern over insurance coverage with Regence. For my family, we have chosen to enroll in my husband's insurance rather than Salem Health (Moda) due to financial reasons. Due to this, even as an employee of Salem Health, my husband, son and I are no longer able to receive care at Salem Health. If Santiam Hospital were to lose their contract with Regence, it would remove our local option for healthcare, which is unfortunate from a care standpoint, however, it also removes our ability to support our local hospital. As so many residents up the Santiam Canyon rely on Santiam Hospital and resources already limited for those residents, losing the Regence contract would be another barrier to care for some. With that being said, I would love to see stronger resources in our community, whether that be expanding existing service lines (cardiology, women's services, etc.), or bringing in new resources altogether.

Anonymous

157. 5/19/2026

Excited about the level of care and expansion of support that this partnership will provide to the community

Andrew Frey

158. 5/19/2026

Dear Governor Kotek and Dr. Sejal Hathi, and HCMO Decision makers,

I respectfully ask you to carefully consider the benefits of bringing together Salem Health Hospitals and Clinics and Santiam Hospitals and Clinics and support their application.

I write as a 40-year Oregon resident whose perspective comes from leadership roles with mid-Willamette Valley nonprofit boards, a career in Oregon higher education leadership, and my current role at Salem Health. Based on these experiences, I offer my personal support for the Salem/Santiam partnership.

Access to quality healthcare is deeply personal to me. I have been a Salem Health emergency room and intensive care patient during three life-threatening situations. Those experiences gave me firsthand knowledge of extraordinary expertise and compassionate care within the Salem Health system, and I am confident that level of care will continue under this partnership.

Residents of the mid-Willamette Valley depend on reliable, high-quality healthcare close to home. This partnership will help preserve and strengthen that access for the future.

I see every day the impact of provider shortages, financial strain on clinics, and barriers to healthcare access. This partnership would strengthen local healthcare by improving care coordination, expanding access to specialists and services, supporting recruitment and retention of healthcare professionals, and sustaining rural and community-based healthcare operations.

Concerns about affordability, competition, accountability, and local identity are understandable and deserve consideration. However, the long-term benefits of this partnership and the stability it would bring to healthcare services across our region outweigh those concerns.

Most importantly, this partnership will help to protect seniors, working families, vulnerable populations, and residents of smaller communities throughout the Salem/Santiam service area.

This proposal is more than a business decision. Yours is a decision about people and about improving healthcare access and quality for the future of the mid-Willamette Valley. Your approval would be a helpful and useful decision for the people you intend to serve.

Sincerely,

Jim Bauer

159. 5/19/2026

My experience is that Salem Health is invested in providing high quality care for community members and has a culture of continuous improvement, which will be beneficial for all communities served.

Michelle Sullivan

160. 5/19/2026

I am in favor of the affiliation between Salem Health and Santiam Health and should be allowed to proceed.

Ruben Pollak

161. 5/19/2026

I am writing to express my absolute support for this merger between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital & Clinics. This would provide necessary access for patients for exams and procedures in the surrounding areas and help to expedite treatment and care when needed. Volumes are rapidly increasing and too many times, either one or both locations are backlogged and unable to get anyone in for a necessary exam in a timely fashion. With these two hospitals combining, it will open up opportunity for quicker access and availability allowing us to utilize both campuses to work toward getting someone in quicker without a lengthy delay. This will also allow us to expand our services and open the door for growth and new opportunities that would not have existed before. With higher costs for services and lower reimbursements coming back, this merger would provide longevity for both hospitals and ensure the ability to care for our patients throughout this area and the outlying communities for a long time to come. The need for Santiam Hospital is apparent and very necessary. Not allowing this merger to go through would put patient care at risk and continue to decrease accessibility causing patients and families to travel long distances at times for care.

Adam Mellott

162. 5/19/2026

I have been a long standing patient of Salem Health. Taking advantage of their wonderful Woodburn Clinic. It is wonderful to have a primary care, urgent care, Imaging and Lab all so close to home. Salem Health has always given myself and my family excellent care. A connection and expanding to another rural health location would be so helpful to other families. Keeping care close to home for those in rural

communities. Thank you (HCMO) for the opportunity to provide input. I support this partnership and hope to keep doors open to all families in rural health areas.

Meryl Donohue

163. 5/19/2026

I was recently walking through the Salem Hospital campus and fell into step with a gentleman, who pointed back at Building B, and told me that he was the first baby to be born in that building. He said he has been coming to Salem Hospital for 72 years now. I was also born at Salem Hospital, just in a different building. And I have been coming to Salem Hospital ever since, both as a patient and as an employee. I have been working for Salem Health since 1993 and have participated in multiple projects to partner with other healthcare organizations over the years. I have seen the benefit to our patients, communities, and employees because of these partnerships. Some of the best people I work with have joined us from other organizations. I have full confidence that a partnership with Santiam will result in the same benefits, and I will provide my full support as we work together. I want the next babies born here to continue to receive quality healthcare from a local provider for many, many years to come.

Michelle Roberts

164. 5/19/2026

To the Health Care Market Oversight team, I am writing in strong support of the proposed affiliation between Santiam Hospital & Clinics and Salem Health. I have worked at Santiam for the past 21 years, and this organization is far more than just my place of employment. It is where I delivered both of my babies, where I receive my primary care, and where my family and I have turned for care over the years. I have also had the experience of using the emergency room at both Santiam and Salem Health, and I have had family members receive care through both organizations as well. Because of these experiences, my support for this affiliation is both professional and deeply personal. I know the value these organizations bring to our community, and I know how important it is for patients and families to have trusted, connected care close to home.

When care is needed beyond the scope of services Santiam can provide, Salem is the natural next step for many in our community. That is already the reality for patients and families, and I believe this affiliation can make that transition feel more seamless,

coordinated, and less stressful at times when people are often already facing uncertainty. I also believe these two organizations have a great deal to offer one another. Both provide quality care, and by joining forces, patients should continue to experience that same high standard of care while still preserving the qualities that make each organization unique and allow for patient preference. As a staff member, I also see this as an opportunity to create more job opportunities, expand the knowledge base of employees, and strengthen the local health care workforce that our community depends on.

I also want to acknowledge the concern that has been raised about payer insurance contracts. While I understand why those concerns matter, I do not believe they should outweigh the broader needs of the patients, families, and employees who rely on these organizations every day. Reimbursement challenges are complicated and reflect shared pressures across the health care system, including payers. As someone who works and lives in the Santiam community, I see firsthand how much the financial side of health care continues to change. The cost of delivering care continues to rise, from technology and coordination needs to facility upkeep, salaries, and benefits. These are not optional expenses; they are part of what it takes to provide safe, high-quality care and keep services available locally. For me, this affiliation represents reassurance that there is greater strength and support to help weather those challenges and to create a more stable future for health care in our community. More than anything, I want to see our patients continue to receive care close to home, our employees continue to have opportunities to work and grow here, and my own family continue to seek care in the community we love. For all of these reasons, I strongly support the affiliation between Santiam and Salem Health.

Thank you for your consideration.

Cassandra Posvar Martinez

165. 5/20/2026

Having a broader partnership will be a benefit to the rural communities.

Josh Allen

166. 5/20/2026

My name is Melissa Baurer, and I serve as the Executive Director of Community Development at Santiam Hospital & Clinics. I am also a wife and mother of two children, and my family receives care at Santiam. I offer this comment from both a professional and personal perspective.

I want to begin by recognizing and appreciating the commitment demonstrated by both organizations' leadership to truly listen to the communities they serve. Over the past several months, leadership from Santiam and Salem Health have participated in more than 40 listening sessions, town halls, and community conversations to ensure transparency, accessibility, and responsiveness to public input. These conversations were not limited to formal settings, but took place in local gathering spaces, including establishments like Giovanni's—meeting people where they are and creating space for honest dialogue. That effort matters.

I was hired in 2017 to lead the development of service integration at Santiam Hospital & Clinics. From the beginning, this work has been rooted in a belief that health care extends beyond clinical walls and requires strong coordination between medical care, social services, and community resources.

The Service Integration Team model has become a foundational part of how Santiam responds to community need. Its value has been demonstrated time and again. In 2020, following the Labor Day wildfires, this approach allowed us to quickly mobilize and serve more than 300 households through disaster case management, connecting individuals and families to critical resources during one of the most devastating events our region has experienced. More recently, when delays in SNAP benefits created immediate hardship for community members, our team again pivoted quickly activating a mobile response to meet people where they were and ensure access to support.

As this affiliation is considered, it is critically important to me that community remains at the center of our work. The commitment to maintaining service integration as a service line—and exploring opportunities to expand this model into other rural communities—represents an investment in upstream health, prevention, and community-based care that is essential to long-term outcomes.

Just as critical, this affiliation strengthens access to care for our community in very real and tangible ways. It opens the door to expanded specialty services, coordinated care across a broader system, infrastructure support, and one My Chart. For rural

communities like ours, access to specialty care is often limited or requires travel outside the region. This partnership creates a pathway for patients and families to receive more comprehensive care while remaining connected to their local providers and care teams.

I believe this affiliation is necessary to ensure that Santiam Hospital & Clinics can continue to provide accessible, high-quality care close to home, while expanding the depth and breadth of services available to our community. At the same time, preserving community-centered programs and local governance will ensure that care remains responsive, equitable, and grounded in local needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment and for your thoughtful consideration throughout this process.

Melissa Baurer

167. 5/20/2026

I have spent about 7 years working in Information Services at Salem Health. In that time, I have come to understand that great health care is not just built at the bedside, it is built by every team across the organization working in the same direction. I am writing today because I believe the partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital is the right direction, and I want the Oregon Health Authority to hear that from someone who sees this organization from the inside. I have a personal connection to this issue as well. I am from the Salem area (and moving back there again soon) and have family that live and use the care at Salem Health and Santiam. I also grew up in rural Oregon and know the importance of having access to care that is close to home. That experience shapes how I think about this partnership. Access to local health care is not something people think about until they need it — and when they need it, nothing else matters more. Health care data is among the most sensitive information that exists — and protecting it is one of the most important responsibilities in medicine. I've learned to take that very seriously. In an era of increasingly sophisticated cyber threats, the work of keeping patient records safe is never finished. It requires vigilance, investment and a team that takes the responsibility seriously every single day. In my 7 years on the IT team at Salem Health, I have seen that commitment firsthand. Extending those protections to Santiam Hospital & Clinics through this partnership means patients in the canyon can trust that their most personal information is in capable, dedicated hands. I am asking the Oregon Health Authority to support this

partnership and, in doing so, to support the thousands of people who depend on Santiam Hospital & Clinics for their care.

Austin McDonald

168. 5/20/2026

Delays in approval processes can significantly impact patients who already face barriers related to distance, provider shortages, and limited local services. I appreciate the work of HCMO and encourage an efficient review process that balances oversight with the urgent healthcare needs of rural populations.

Jacob Ings

169. 5/20/2026

Very excited about the partnership with Santiam! I would be excited to help out in any way if Security is needed there!

Benjamin Rash

170. 5/18/2026

Hello,

I wanted to write an email about the negative impact of this merger between Santiam Hospital and Salem Health.

I know as I worked at Santiam hospital that the main factor in Santiam wanting to get a merger is money, the CEO has been trying to get this hospital bought by a larger entity for a while. I know personally from talking with her that she is going to retire once this deal gets done as it will be a huge payday for her and the rest of the executive staff.

I have blue cross insurance and Salem health does not take that insurance, one of the largest insurance and where am I and so many others supposed to go for care? Portland or Corvallis? So many people in this area have bad insurance, or insurance not accepted by Salem health, we will be left out and reluctant to seek care as the drive to a hospital or clinic that takes blue cross is over an hour away.

We were told that Santiam hospital has millions in cash they are sitting on and the fact they don't use that money to upgrade existing services is just because they want to look good financially for Salem health but they play it off as the hospital is weak and

needs a larger entities money, they don't need Salem health, they want a payday at the expense of the workers and patients.

Please don't allow the rich to get richer with the cost of everything going up this hospital just wants an excuse to pay out the executives and CEO so they can ride off into the sunset with their wonderful lives while the rest of us struggle even more.

Thank you for your time.

Jonathan Arras

171. 5/19/2026

Jim Bauer submitted a [public comment](#) regarding the proposed transaction.

172. 5/20/2026

REGARDING THE SALEM HEALTH - SANTIAM TRANSACTION:

As a family practice physician who has worked at Santiam Hospital for the past 19 years, I view the alignment between Santiam and Salem Health as a meaningful and positive development for our community. This partnership has the potential to bring much-needed services and expanded clinical capacity to the Santiam region, enhancing our ability to deliver comprehensive, high-quality care to our patients.

Beyond infrastructure and service growth, I believe this alignment will foster a stronger, more cohesive healthcare environment. When supported by a system designed to function efficiently and effectively, both patients and staff benefit. It enables us, as clinicians, to focus more fully on patient care while working within a framework that reinforces excellence.

Equally important, this transition is likely to cultivate a renewed sense of shared purpose among staff. As we begin to see tangible improvements in care delivery and workflow, it will strengthen morale and reinforce a collective commitment to quality. In turn, this will contribute to a more positive workplace culture - one grounded in collaboration, professionalism, and dedication to the well-being of our community.

Claire E. King, MD

173. 5/21/26

My name is Bill Little. I have worked for Salem Health for 28 years. I am a Hospital Billing Epic Analyst on the Revenue Cycle team. Both of my kids were born in Salem Hospital. I have been to our Family Practice Clinics, Urgent Care Clinics, Emergency Rooms, and I also had a procedure (day surgery) in the hospital. I have always felt I received the best care. I enjoy working for Salem Health and feel like family. Anyone who knows me, knows I think before I speak. I strive to make good decisions. I like to support my coworkers who in turn provide care to patients. I believe the partnership of Salem Health and Santiam Hospital will be a positive outcome for the community. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide my full support of the partnership.

William A. Little

174. 5/21/26.

I strongly support the partnership of Salem Health and Santiam Hospital. I have had the opportunity to be an employee of Salem Health for over a decade. I've seen firsthand the commitment behind the care we provide. My own family and I have been treated both at Salem Hospital and in SH clinics. My experiences as a patient and a family member have been positive. I feel confident referring family and friends to Salem Health for care.

With healthcare costs rising everywhere, partnerships like the one between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital are more important than ever. This partnership will allow for shared resources, reduce duplication, and keep care more affordable and accessible for the people who rely on us.

This partnership will also play a critical role in keeping services open. Hospitals across the state are struggling to maintain specialty care, emergency services, and inpatient units on their own. By joining forces, we can stabilize these services and ensure they remain available close to home.

Jennifer Rice

175. 5/21/26

Salem Health Radiation Oncology

Crystal Krieger

176. 5/22/26

Hello, I live 6 miles from Santiam Hospital and am very excited to see these two health systems merge. I know hospitals are having a very difficult time staying financially sound and it only makes sense to align. If this merger goes through, it will benefit not only the two hospital systems but it will benefit the people of the Santiam canyon. Please consider approving this merger.

Nancy Pifer

177. 5/22/26

Excited to be able to have more services offered for the Santiam Canyon.

Heather Davis

178. 5/22/26

Will provide more care in the Santiam Canyon

Brittany Thackery

179. 5/22/26

Genny Baldwin submitted a [public comment](#) regarding the proposed transaction.

180. 5/26/26

I am worried that this merger will negatively impact Santiam Hospital from Salem hospitals negative reputation. There are reasons for a negative reputation. Just as there is a reason Santiam has a good reputation. They literally care for their community. Also, I worry about the community members that have blue cross blue shield insurance this will limit their access to affordable care.

Kristine Looper

181. 5/26/26

I am writing in support of the proposed affiliation between Santiam Hospital and Salem Health.

Santiam Hospital is an important part of this community and preserving access to local care matters. At the same time, small community hospitals are facing real challenges with staffing, resources, financial pressure, and the ability to maintain services close to home. This affiliation feels like a positive step toward long-term stability.

From a patient standpoint, this partnership has the potential to improve access to specialty care, strengthen coordination, and keep more services available locally. From an employee standpoint, it can also provide more support, better resources, stronger systems, and additional opportunities for growth and development. That matters for recruitment, retention, and overall staff well-being.

I believe this affiliation can help Santiam Hospital remain a strong, community-focused hospital while benefiting from the support of a larger health system. I respectfully support the affiliation and believe it has the potential to benefit patients, employees, and the broader community.

Amber Alexander

182. 5/26/26

I believe the Santiam-Salem affiliation will strengthen our access to care and improve not only access to specialty services but timeliness to care.

Krista Call

183. 5/26/26

I'm a current employee at Salem Health and have been for the last few years. It's a wonderful organization to work with and for and I can't say enough good things about it to my friends, family and community when given the opportunity. I think this potential partnership between Salem Health and Santiam is not only an important opportunity but has potential to make such a positive difference and benefit to our region. Access to healthcare for rural communities seemed to be dwindling, not increasing. Financial stability for clinics, hospitals and healthcare entities throughout Oregon have been drastically shifting, making for very unpredictable workforce and financial solvency. It is hard to imagine when these entities in your own back yard are faced with hard decisions on whether they can continue to operate as is, in the face of multiple adversities or close their doors for good and therefore remove what once was a solid pillar for so many, for so long, whether for personal access to healthcare needs, or job force dependability, or both. An opportunity for these partnerships to take place and exist and build on seem like the exact right thing to do, so that people can continue to get the care they need, to work the jobs that they love and help the communities they are helping day in and day out. Thankful that the HCMO is allowing the community, the employees, and the leadership to give their opinions, voice their true feelings and have

a formal opportunity for input. Everyone's voices matter and I hope that this partnership will be able to move forward with trust and success for all those that it impacts. Thank you!

Chelsea Hickok

184. 5/26/26

The merger will allow the care needed to be provided in a more rural area. Being able to have high level care, and resources available at Santiam that SH has will only benefit the community.

Melissa Burgdorf

185. 5/26/26

No comment at this time

Deana Wyland

186. 5/26/26

I hope this will work out for everyone!

karlene sprayberry

187. 5/27/26

I believe this partnership is necessary for the Canyon. As healthcare continues to evolve, we are seeing more and more smaller independent healthcare organizations struggle and disappear. The reality is that Santiam will need to partner with a larger organization, period, in order to continue providing care. If not Salem Health, then who? Other larger healthcare organizations that span multiple states? I don't believe that's what our small towns want. Personally, I don't think there is a better LOCAL healthcare organization than Salem Health for Santiam to partner with.

Jacqueline Priore

188. 5/27/26

I am a 20 yr resident of Stayton. I have experienced office visits, ER visits, and surgery at Santiam Hospital. Employees do their jobs well and care about the people they serve.

I am for the affiliation with Salem Health. It will bring long term financial stability as well as access to specialty providers.

Thank you for your speedy consideration.

Rebecca Hilkey

189. 5/27/26

Dear Oregon Health Authority Representatives,

I am writing in support of the proposed merger between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital. I believe this partnership represents a crucial step forward for healthcare access, sustainability, and patient care throughout our region, especially for rural and smaller communities.

Healthcare systems across Oregon and the Nation are facing increasing challenges, including staffing shortages, rising operational costs, growing patient demands, and limited access to specialized care. Small community hospitals are especially vulnerable during this time. By working together through this merger, Salem Health and Santiam Hospital can strengthen resources, improve coordination of care, and better prepare for the future healthcare needs of our communities.

This merger has the potential to positively impact patients in several meaningful ways:

- Improved access to healthcare services and specialists closer to home
- Greater collaboration between providers and healthcare teams
- Increased ability to recruit and retain qualified medical professionals
- Enhanced technology, equipment, and healthcare innovation
- Improved continuity of care between rural and larger healthcare systems
- Stronger financial stability to help preserve healthcare services in smaller communities
- Expanded opportunities for preventative care, outpatient services, and community health programs

Small communities benefit when healthcare organizations work together rather than compete against one another. In times where many experts are warning about future healthcare shortages and increasing strain on medical systems, collaboration is essential. This merger demonstrates a commitment to long-term stability and ensuring patients continue to receive safe, quality, and accessible care.

For patients and families in rural Oregon, local healthcare services are critical. Preserving and strengthening those services through partnerships like this can help reduce delays in care, minimize the need for long-distance travel, and improve overall patient outcomes.

I respectfully encourage the Oregon Health Authority to consider the long-term benefits this merger can bring to patients, healthcare workers, and the surrounding communities. I believe this partnership will help create a stronger and more sustainable healthcare system for the future.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jennifer Desantis

190. 5/27/26

"Growth for the sake of growth is the ideology of the cancer cell."

-Edward Abbey, *The Journey Home: Some Words in Defense of the American West*

191. 5/27/26

Hello,

I have been part of the Salem Health family for nearly 11 years, working in finance and more recently with our employed medical group. I am deeply proud of how this organization cares for our community. I often say that people truly have no idea how much work goes on behind the scenes to strive for excellence — it's inspiring, and it's what keeps me motivated day after day.

Healthcare faces real structural challenges, and the headwinds are not getting easier. But Salem Health has been a pillar of this community for 130 years, and we intend to be here for 130 more. What makes that possible is our culture — our people.

Partnering with Santiam Hospital strengthens our ability to serve communities across

the mid-Willamette Valley and into the canyon. Together, we will be better equipped to face what lies ahead.

I strongly support this partnership because the people who have brought it this far care deeply about Marion and Polk counties. They are the same people who show up every day to care for you and for me — for our families, our friends, our neighbors, and our coworkers. That will not change. It will only grow.

Reid Sund, MBAHM, CPA, CHFP

Salem Health Medical Group CFO

192. 5/28/26

As an employee of Salem Health, I have the privilege of working with people every day who are motivated to provide the highest quality of care to our community. I would much rather see Salem Health and their community-based mission be allowed to partner with the great staff of Santiam Hospital rather than Santiam be forced to work with an out of state partner or close entirely. I truly believe this partnership is what is best for our community.

Tyler Baze

193. 5/28/26

Will the joining of Salem health and santiam hospital effect ohp coverage?

Breanna Conklin

194. 5/28/26

I am writing both as a healthcare employee and as a patient in our community to express strong support for the proposed collaboration between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital & Clinics.

From an employee perspective, I see firsthand the challenges that smaller health systems face in today's environment—staffing constraints, rising costs, and increasing complexity of care. Partnerships like this can bring stability, shared resources, and expanded clinical capabilities that directly benefit care teams. When clinicians are better supported, have access to more robust systems, and can collaborate across a broader network, patient care improves. This kind of collaboration also helps retain

skilled healthcare workers by creating a more sustainable and supportive work environment.

As a patient, my priority is reliable access to high-quality, timely care close to home. The proposed integration offers the potential for expanded services, improved care coordination, and continued access to local providers who understand our community. It is reassuring to know that Santiam's local presence can be strengthened by Salem Health's broader infrastructure, expertise, and resources, helping ensure that care remains accessible without requiring unnecessary travel.

Most importantly, this collaboration represents a proactive step toward preserving and strengthening healthcare in the region rather than reacting to financial or operational challenges after they impact patients.

I respectfully encourage approval of this proposal so that both organizations can move forward together to better serve patients, support healthcare workers, and ensure the long-term sustainability of care in our community.

Samuel Badgley

195. 5/28/26

Salem Health Leadership has proven over and over to be sound, as well as compassionate, and I am expecting that this relationship will bring increased resources and support to all employees and patients involved.

Janet Jennings

196. 5/29/26

Dear Health Care Market Oversight (HCMO) Team,

My name is D'Artagnan Stubbs, and I am the Supervisor of Employer Branding for Salem Health. I work closely in recruitment strategy and workforce development efforts to attract and retain the talent needed to sustain high-quality care in our community. Since October of 2025, Salem Health is where I receive any of my medical care.

I would like to share an example of care I received at the Salem Health main campus that reset the standard of care I expect and standard I hope to see available for all communities across the Willamette Valley and into the Santiam Canyon for generations to come.

I recently needed to update my immunizations and complete a series of lab tests. While I often find myself in hospitals across the state supporting family members, I rarely go for my own care, and I expected to spend hours waiting, experience discomfort with multiple needle attempts, and deal with soreness afterward. Instead, the process was remarkably efficient, with each visit taking less than 30 minutes. Every member of staff I encountered was professional, welcoming, and highly skilled. The required draws were completed in a single attempt without unnecessary pain or complication, which has not always been my experience in other health systems.

While I do not serve patients directly, I am proud to support those who do in their mission of care.

The proposed partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital comes at an important moment. Health systems across Oregon are facing workforce shortages, rising operational costs, and increasing pressure to maintain even minimum access to care in rural areas. In my opinion, this partnership represents a thoughtful and proactive response to those challenges. By aligning resources, strengthening care networks, and supporting long-term sustainability, this collaboration has the potential to improve access, preserve essential services, and ensure that patients in the Santiam Canyon and surrounding communities continue to receive high-quality, local care.

I appreciate the HCMO's commitment to thoughtful oversight and for providing the opportunity to share input. Thank you for considering my perspective.

I strongly support the Salem Health and Santiam Hospital partnership and believe it will play an important role in strengthening healthcare access and resilience in our region.

Sincerely,

D'Artagnan Stubbs

197. 5/30/26

I strongly support the proposed partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital.

Healthcare organizations across Oregon continue to face significant challenges, including workforce shortages, financial pressures, increasing regulatory requirements,

and the growing complexity of patient care. Strategic partnerships are essential to ensuring that local communities maintain access to high-quality healthcare services close to home.

This partnership represents an opportunity to strengthen healthcare delivery across our region by leveraging the unique strengths of both organizations. By working together, Salem Health and Santiam Hospital can enhance access to specialized services, improve care coordination, invest in innovation, and create a more sustainable healthcare system for our community.

Most importantly, this partnership keeps patients and families at the center. A collaborative approach can help preserve local healthcare services while expanding access to resources, expertise, and support that may otherwise be difficult to achieve independently.

Kelly Bodnarchuk

198. 6/1/26

As a current Salem Health employee, I fully support the proposed affiliation with Santiam Hospital. This partnership strengthens healthcare access across our communities, particularly in rural areas where services are limited. By combining resources, we can enhance care coordination, expand specialty services, and improve operational efficiency all while maintaining the high quality, patient-centered care both organizations are known for.

This integration also presents valuable opportunities for staff development, shared best practices, and a stronger, more resilient healthcare system for Marion, Polk, and Linn Counties. I believe this collaboration will benefit patients, employees, and the broader community, and I'm proud to be part of this forward looking transition.

Jordan Curry

199. 6/1/26

It's unfortunate to hear that Regence is causing waves with the potential merger between Salem & Santiam. Salem health has successfully merged with several other businesses/practices recently, which has already resulted in higher quality of care in the surrounding areas. Regence wants to prevent this partnership from happening, but what happens when Santiam can no longer support themselves and there ends up

being no hospital at all in that area? Is that when Regence wins the game? This decision should be made solely based on concern for patient care and sustainability/improvement of current practices and facilities. We are really going to let one lousy insurance company have an opinion on this?

Michelle Classen

200. 6/1/26

To the Health Care Market Oversight Office,

My name is Lisa Ketchum, and I have worked at Salem Health for nearly twenty-five years, including the past decade as Director of the Women's and Children's Service Line. I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital, which I believe will significantly benefit our community.

This partnership will help ensure that the Santiam community maintains local access to sustainable, high-quality, and integrated health care services. It will also expand access to essential services, including perinatal care, helping to meet the evolving needs of patients and families. In recent years, three labor and delivery units have closed across Oregon, making it even more critical to preserve local access to obstetric care. Coordination and collaboration in maternity care are essential to addressing the complex challenges facing Oregon, and this partnership represents an important step forward. Just as importantly, aligning with Salem Health—a local nonprofit organization—will keep governance rooted in the mid-Willamette Valley communities it serves.

I am proud to work for an organization that values transparency, collaboration, and continuous quality improvement. This culture strengthens our healthcare teams and, most importantly, enhances the care we provide to patients and families. As both a healthcare professional and a patient who has received inpatient and outpatient care at Salem Health, I have personally experienced the positive impact of this commitment to excellence. As a nurse, I am honored to work alongside dedicated nurses and interprofessional colleagues who are deeply committed to Salem Health's mission: to improve the health and well-being of the people and communities we serve.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input. I strongly support this partnership and its potential to improve access, quality, and continuity of care in our region.

Sincerely,

Lisa Ketchum

201. 6/1/26

We have lived in Lyons, OR since 1997 and Salem prior to that since 1974. We are very familiar with Salem Hospital/Salem Health having been admitted there a few times over the years and they always provided excellent care.

Recently I came down with pneumonia in both lungs and didn't realize how sick I was. Our daughter recognized how sick I was and took me into the ER at Santiam Hospital at 9:30 AM on May 31, 2026 where I was admitted for three days and treated successfully for pneumonia.

We had never been to this hospital except for a covid booster shot a few years ago and we don't know anyone who works there.

Santiam Hospital doctors and nurses saved my life and at 80 years old; I'm very grateful for their professionalism & care. Their staff rivaled everything I had experienced at Salem Hospital/Health over many years.

Sincerely,

Milon Whittier

202. 6/1/26

As the Nursing Director of Psychiatric and Emergency Services at Salem Health, I strongly support this partnership between Santiam Hospital & Clinics and Salem Health.

Every day in emergency and behavioral health care, we see firsthand how access, capacity, and timely transitions of care directly impact patient safety and outcomes. This partnership represents an important step toward strengthening those critical points across the continuum, especially for patients in rural and canyon communities who rely on local access during moments of crisis.

Santiam has long been a trusted source of care in its community, and aligning with a system that has demonstrated commitment to sustaining and expanding rural services brings both stability and opportunity. The ability to better utilize existing capacity,

improve throughput, and enhance coordination between emergency, inpatient, and outpatient services will meaningfully benefit patients and care teams alike.

I also deeply appreciate the commitment to maintaining local governance. Ensuring that decisions remain informed by the community's voice is essential, particularly when caring for vulnerable populations.

This partnership reflects a shared commitment to patient-centered care, access, and long-term sustainability. I am optimistic about what this means for the future of care in the Santiam Canyon and across our region.

Mandi Dix

203. 6/2/26

I have been treated at the Santiam Hospital ER twice in the past few years. They have been very professional and the care has been very good.

I live in the Santiam Canyon. To lose this facility would be devastating to the community.

It seems that in order to maintain a medical facility in the area, a merger is needed.

I urge you to proceed quickly in approval of the planned merger.

Please feel free to contact me if you have need for further comment.

Leslie Tracy

204. 6/3/26

I am writing to express my strong support for the continued partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital, and to respectfully encourage the Oregon Health Authority to see this important collaboration through.

I have had the privilege of serving at Salem Health since 2011, beginning my journey as an intern and growing under the guidance of mentors and leaders who are deeply committed to keeping care local and accessible for our community. That commitment has shaped both my professional development and my belief in the importance of strong, community-based partnerships.

Salem Health is an organization grounded in continuous improvement, with Lean principles embedded in our daily work. Central to this approach is one of our core tenets—respect for people—which guides how we care for patients, support our teams, and collaborate with partners. This focus ensures that we consistently strive to deliver high-quality, patient-centered care.

Keeping care local is a shared priority. Salem Health has demonstrated its ability to deliver excellent care and serve as a reliable, trusted community partner. Likewise, Santiam Hospital plays a vital role in meeting the needs of its community. Together, our organizations share a deep commitment to improving the health and well-being of the individuals and communities we serve.

This partnership represents an important opportunity to strengthen access to care, enhance coordination, and sustain services close to home for our communities. I urge OHA to support and advance this effort, recognizing the meaningful impact it will have on the patients and families we collectively serve.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sue Xiong

205. 6/3/26

To the Oregon Health Authority,

I am writing to express my full support for the partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital and Clinics.

I am a lifelong patient of Santiam Hospital and Clinics and have also used Salem Hospital for specialty care. I have consistently received high-quality care from both organizations.

I have also served on the Santiam Board of Directors for more than 26 years. For most of that time, we sought to remain an independent hospital. However, since COVID, we have experienced declining revenues even as utilization has increased. As revenues fell to an unsustainable level, the board determined that it was time to find a partner to help stabilize our organization. We considered many potential partners before reaching out to Salem Health. Salem Health is the best fit for our community because it is nearby, locally led, nonprofit, aligned with our community-focused mission, and already shares many of our patients for services that Santiam cannot provide.

A shared EHR will enhance patient care by reducing delays and errors in the exchange of test results and specialist information between providers. Expanding Santiam's service integration across Salem Health's network will also improve patient access to critical services.

One of the primary concerns raised in public comments is that this partnership could create a monopoly in Polk and Marion Counties. I do not believe that will be the case. Many counties in Oregon are served by only one hospital system, and although hospitals in Silverton, Corvallis, and Portland may be less convenient, they remain accessible alternatives. This partnership between Salem Health and Santiam will help keep healthcare locally managed rather than controlled by a larger organization that may be less connected to our communities.

The concern regarding Regence BlueCross BlueShield is valid and should be reviewed by the Health Authority. When multiple hospital systems have raised concerns about the contracts offered by Regence, that suggests a broader issue that warrants investigation. This is an important statewide matter, but it should not delay approval of this partnership.

Time is critical for approval of this partnership. Santiam's contract for Epic expires in June 2027, and our current Epic partner does not wish to continue providing those services. As a result, we must secure a new partner soon. Salem Health is the right partner. Transitioning to a new EHR is a complex project that must begin now.

I respectfully ask for your prompt approval of this partnership. The future of healthcare in the Santiam Canyon depends on it. Please support this partnership with Salem Health so we can continue providing the Santiam Canyon communities with the healthcare they deserve.

Mike Odenthal

206. 6/5/26

I am writing to voice my support of the proposed merger between Santiam Hospital and Salem Health. My husband and I are both Physician Assistants in family medicine. We have great respect for our leadership team and our colleagues, all of whom strive to do the best work they can within an imperfect healthcare landscape. It is also clear to us how highly the Santiam healthcare system is valued by patients in the Willamette Valley and beyond.

We acknowledge that Santiam is at a time of uncertainty and tumult. The challenges faced by small healthcare systems—well-articulated in many of the above letters—are becoming wholly unsustainable. It is clear that a strong partnership is the only path forward, not only for financial solvency, but also to expand services and provide the level of care that our patients need. Working in primary care, we see how great the needs are in our communities, and how many people and resources it takes to provide adequate support. Salem Health is a fitting partner, with a commitment to serving the local community and working with Santiam to streamline and bolster each part of our healthcare system.

Of course, there will be many challenges to work through as the merger unfolds—this is a necessary and expected part of change. But we are confident in the ability of our leadership, colleagues, and hospital/clinic staff to navigate and negotiate these obstacles. We urge you to consider the impact of these hospitals on local community members, and support us in sustaining and expanding this impact for years to come.

Kelsey Porter & Ian Cavigli

207. 6/5/26

United Way of the Mid-Willamette Valley submitted a [public comment letter](#).

208. 6/5/26

Hello

I am a certified nurse midwife. I lived in rural Molalla, Oregon for the birth of my first child in 2000. I have extended family living in Stayton. I am pleased to hear of the Santiam/ Salem Health merge. I currently live in rural Canby, OR.

I'm not sure how the merge will go but it is a small hospital and will be beneficial to have support for transfer to Salem. I support Santiam staying open

Our rural hospitals closing down leads to families and pregnant people needing to travel far to get the essential care they need. I support endeavors to keep our smaller community hospitals open to prevent over saturation of our larger community hospitals.

I still find the Willamette Valley to have a dearth of birth options. When I had my son in 2000 I was limited on where I could birth by insurance. I drove 2 almost 3 hours with

preterm labor and ended up having a ruptured appendicitis. I became a midwife later after this event and have provided full scope care since 2006. I'm fortunate I survived and could be at the bedside even during the pandemic attending births.

I was one of the first midwives at the current Salem Health midwifery program. At the time the hospital was going under due to many uninsured and unattended births. The midwives and hospitalist program emerged to ameliorate that and provide prenatal care and intrapartum support. None of us original midwives still work at Salem Health, but I'm only concerned that we are still heading toward a larger maternity healthcare crisis in Oregon.

The Willamette Valley still has a dearth of healthcare options. This will help. But we likely also need more hospitals between Salem and Portland in general.

I work in Portland and Bend but my community and the options available are important to me.

Thank you,

Elizabeth Ribbeck, DNP, MN, MA, RN, CNM

209. 6/6/26

Saturday, June 06, 2026

Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposed affiliation.

My name is Ron Etzel, and for the past 25 years I had the privilege of being a member of Santiam Hospital's Board of Directors (since December of 2000). During this time I was a witness to many great things that took place at our local independent hospital (and I truly value that independence). As the Chairman of the Board in 2009, I was part of the team that approached HUD in Washington DC and New York, seeking to procure a loan guarantee, for the purpose of constructing our current "Tower". We were successful in acquiring the first HUD loan guarantee to a hospital in Oregon in over 50 years.

As I already mentioned, I truly value the independence Santiam Hospital has thrived in since its opening in 1953, and I would like that independence to continue. In September of 2025 I met with Maggie Hudson to discuss my decision to separate from the Board

of Directors at the end of December. The proposed affiliation had become something that I could not support.

I feel that I am still bound by the rule of confidentiality regarding information that I was privy to during my tenure on the Board. That prevents me from discussing certain details regarding the affiliation.

Therefore I am now just a public citizen expressing my opinion of this venture.

Thank You for this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Ron Etzel

210. 6/8/26

Freres Lumber employs 450 people in the Santiam Canyon and provides health insurance for up to 800 lives, our family donated the land where Santiam hospital and clinics are located in Stayton Oregon, and recently donated \$1 million toward the updating of the hospital and expanding the emergency room. We may have had second thoughts about the recent donation had we known about the proposed takeover by Salem Health. We believe the consolidation of the 2 entities will reduce competition and raise healthcare costs to local residents and to our plan participants. Salem Health has acted in bad faith with Regence in renewal negotiations and our plan participants have been blocked from using Salem Health facilities and doctors for over one year we used Regence insurance for over 70 years, and we were forced to move to Providence on June 1st only to learn they are abandoning the business. Salem Health held a community meeting at Freres auditorium in Santiam Hospital recently and stated it had one billion dollars in reserves, yet it was unwilling to deal in good faith with Regence. We have legitimate concerns about Santiam Hospitals takeover by this bad actor. And it will harm the Stayton and surrounding communities and the quality of care received please stop the proposed takeover for antitrust reasons. Thank you for the opportunity to comment sincerely Rob Freres President of Freres Lumber and Freres Timber in Lyons Oregon. Appreciate the ability to comment. Bye.

211. 6/8/26

I am writing in response to an article in our local Our Town newspaper requesting patient input about the proposed merger between Santiam Hospital and Salem Health. I have been a patient at both facilities and would like to vote against the proposed merger. There is a huge difference in the amount of time it takes to be seen in the Emergency Dept. at Santiam Hospital and Salem Health. Santiam Hospital Emergency room gives timely and good care, letting the patient and family know if there is any kind of delay. Salem Health can take hours to be seen without any kind of updating, and it can take up to a day to be admitted to a room in the hospital. Santiam Hospital rooms are clean and good care given. Salem Health can take a long time after you ring the buzzer to get care, and doctors have a hard time speaking English and giving simple instructions. I could go on - but you get the picture. We moved here 20 yrs. ago, and one of the reasons was to be near Santiam Hospital and not go to Salem Health. Please do not take away our community hospital to be absorbed into some kind of large conglomerate system. Thank you

212. 6/12/26

Hi I am a current employee of Salem Health that I wanted to leave a public comment about the merger or possible merger with Salem health and Santiam. I will say that I'm not feeling very positive about Salem Health wanting to go forward with this from a budgetary perspective. As an employee of Salem health in the middle of last year Salem Health did away with all brake nurses throughout the hospital and there are no break nurses assigned each shift any longer and instead they have us fill out these trackers for each shift saying what other nurse on the floor, or they are calling it a break buddy, covered us for each break and lunch. A lot of nurses are just forging these forms each shift because they are missing breaks and don't even have time to try to escalate who can watch my patients while XYZ happens because our break nurses formerly would actually be able to do tasks for us while we went on our breaks. Whereas now other nurses who watch our patients for us when we're on break can't actually do any tasks for us. Oftentimes we go past breaks and miss them because we really can't be away from our patients without somebody else being able to do some kind of task for us for the most part. We make sure we get our lunch breaks in, but I would say most of the time we missed 2 out of our 3 15-minute breaks during the day. And everyone's just forging the break tracker saying oh you know so and so cover me for those breaks even if they don't take them and the reason for that is we're told if we don't escalate and try to get someone the charge nurse next or

management after the charge nurse to try to cover us for our breaks then it's kind of our own fault and that we could be under corrective action for missing our breaks and not escalating to someone else trying to cover us. There's also been staffing issues regarding CNAs and most nurses are not having a CNA for 2 out of their 4 patients any longer so with that Salem Health is really not posting enough CNA postings especially external postings for CNA positions they're basically just kind of choosing not to hire enough CNAs to not kind of put us in this staffing situation and we're told that that might kind of be consistent for some reason going forth that we might have fairly consistently from now on 2 out of our 4 patients without a CNA and I personally think that before Salem Health looks at doing a merger and spending a lot of money on some things such as that, they should revisit why they're willing to not let us have break nurses and have not enough CNA coverage across the hospital to force nurses to take over full cares on half of their patients. I hope that this information is helpful I am doing this anonymously because of fear of retaliation even if it's kind of under the rug. But I hope that this information is considered thank you.

About HCMO

The Healthcare Market Oversight Program reviews proposed health care business deals to make sure they support statewide goals related to cost, equity, access, and quality. For more info, you can connect with HCMO staff:

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