

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 Emergency Exemption filed by Salem Health and Santiam Hospital & Clinics. OHA accepted public comments through July 24, 2026. 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. 7/9/26

Dear Oregon Health Authority,

I am writing as a concerned community member regarding the proposed partnership between Santiam Hospital and Salem Health.

Recent reports indicate that Santiam Hospital is facing severe financial challenges and has stated that delays in the approval process could threaten its ability to continue serving our community.

My family recently relocated to the Stayton area because I accepted a position at Santiam Hospital. We made this decision believing the hospital had a promising future and would continue providing essential healthcare to our community.

Regardless of the final decision, I respectfully ask that the Oregon Health Authority complete its review as quickly as possible. Prolonged uncertainty affects patients, employees, families, and the entire Santiam Canyon region.

Our community depends on timely access to emergency care, imaging, surgery, and other essential medical services. We need clarity so patients and healthcare workers can plan for the future.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and for your commitment to protecting healthcare access for Oregonians.

2. 7/9/26

Good Morning

I just read that Salem Health and Santiam Hospital has filed for an exemption of OHA review for their merger. I find this completely disheartening, as I am going on my second year of being banned from treating from any Salem Health provider as I am a Regence Insurance client. Regence is the ONLY policy offered by our employer. We have been using Santiam Hospital and providers for our medical care when needed.

I find it ridiculous that both Salem Health and Santiam argue by not allowing the merger, that the Canyon residents will have to drive an hour for care, including pregnancy care in Salem. What they are not disclosing is that many Salem residents have had to drive to Santiam for ongoing pregnancy care/delivery and medical care as they were denied ongoing care with their Salem Health provider in 2025 and 2026. As a Keizer resident, I am driving 45 minutes to Stayton for care. IF OHA approves the merger and does not address the issue with Salem Health and Regence, MANY Canyon residents will be forced to drive 2 hours to Portland for care.

Salem Health is NOT looking out for the Canyon residents to provide ongoing care as they are well aware that many oppose the merger because they will lose medical treatment if it goes through given they have Regence as their insurance carrier. I believe this opposition has been well documented in the town halls held in the Canyon as part of the merger process.

I hope that OHA does the RIGHT thing in addressing the monopoly being created by Salem Health. IF the monopoly is allowed to continue, a large percentage of Marion and Polk county will lose access to the hospital and providers. I am surprised that

there is not a mediation requirement when a large insurance provider and the monopoly of one medical provider fail to reach an agreement. IF this merger is allowed, a mediation to reach an agreement between Salem Health and any health insurance provider should be required going forward.

Thank you for “listening”

Julie Annen

3. 7/9/26

Santiam Hospital and Clinics are vital to this community. It would be absolutely devastating to this community if Santiam were to close. I understand the need for review of a merger, but if the slowness of the process closes Santiam down, it won't matter if it is a good idea or not. The facility will be gone, and the community will pay the price. Please keep in mind that we are talking about people who would have to drive 45 minutes to an hour to get to an ER. Please approve the Emergency Exemption that has been filed by Santiam. Isn't there some way to approve the merger provisionally, with ongoing reviews and adjustments to improve the details of the merger, if it needs it, to better serve the community? We need Santiam.

T Hernandez

4. 7/10/26

A local hospital is essential to maintaining timely, high-quality healthcare for our community. It provides emergency care, routine medical services, specialty treatment, and preventive care that many residents depend on every day. For families, seniors, and individuals with chronic health conditions, having access to healthcare close to home can make a critical difference in health outcomes.

The closure of our local hospital would have far-reaching consequences. Patients would be forced to travel longer distances for emergency and routine care, creating additional financial, physical, and emotional burdens. Delays in treatment could lead to poorer health outcomes, especially during medical emergencies when every minute matters.

Hospital employees would also be significantly affected. The loss of jobs would impact healthcare professionals, support staff, and their families, while reducing the availability of experienced medical providers in our region. The economic effects would

extend beyond the hospital, affecting local businesses and the overall stability of the community.

A hospital is more than a healthcare facility—it is a cornerstone of the community. It supports public health, attracts businesses and families, and provides reassurance that quality medical care is available when it is needed most.

I respectfully request that the review process be completed as quickly as possible while ensuring a thorough evaluation that protects continued access to safe, high-quality healthcare for our community. Preserving local healthcare services is vital to the health, well-being, and future of the people who live and work here.

I respectfully request that the review process of merging with Salem Hospital be completed as quickly as possible while ensuring a thorough evaluation that protects continued access to safe, high-quality healthcare for our community. Preserving local healthcare services is vital to the health, well-being, and future of the people who live and work here.

Sincerely, Carmy & Tim Kuntz, Stayton, OR

5. 7/10/26

Dear Oregon Health Authority Reviewer's,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed merger between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital. As a local resident, I am deeply concerned that this consolidation will negatively impact our community regarding the cost of care and local access to healthcare services.

Insurance Coverage and Access: Ever since Salem Health went out of network with Regence BlueCross BlueShield, many of my family members and friends with this coverage have found it incredibly difficult to get necessary health care close to home. Many have shifted their care to Santiam Hospital specifically because it remains an essential, in-network alternative. I am highly concerned that if this merger goes through, local families with Regence coverage will lose access to Santiam as well, leaving them with limited if any local options for care.

Cost of care: Hospital mergers consistently lead to reduced competition which drives up prices of patients. I am deeply concerned that the merger will result in higher out-of-

pocket costs, increased medical bills, and further disruptions to insurance networks that local families rely on.

Reduced Access and Delays: Salem Health is already the major provider in our area, and it is already incredibly difficult to secure timely appointments and get care when needed. Allowing them to expand further will only worsen these bottlenecks for patients.

Loss of Local Services: I have already experienced the negative impacts of centralized care. Salem Health removed all the imaging machines from the clinic I use. As a result, I am now forced to make an entirely separate trip elsewhere just to get basic imaging tests. I fear this merger will lead to similar service cuts at Santiam, forcing rural patients to travel even further for essential services.

Our community deserves affordable, accessible, and independent healthcare options. I urge the Orrego Health Authority to protect patients and reject this merger.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony.

Sincerely,

Jill Vanlydegraf

Salem, Oregon

6. 7/10/26

It is absolutely inappropriate to allow Salem Health and Santiam to be exempt from the HCMO process. They know there is a lot of negative feedback coming in on this merger - I provided my feedback on the original request already as have so many others. There is no valid reason to allow an exemption. The fact that Santiam waited until they were on the brink is not an emergency for everyone else. I don't want to see Santiam close but there are other things they can do to stay afloat including applying for the rural health grants.

7. 7/10/26

To whom it may concern,

My name is Britni Ryan and I am writing to strongly encourage the approval of the merger between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital and Clinics.

Santiam Hospital is a critical keystone to the healthcare of the rural communities of Mill City, Detroit, Stayton, and more. Thousands of people rely on this system to stay healthy, deliver babies, receive outpatient services and seek care in emergency situations. Just over a month ago, my non-verbal autistic son spent 5 days at this hospital. He was in rough shape but his physician was able to consult with the pediatric team at OHSU over the phone and avoid a transfer to Portland in the middle of the night. I understand OHA's concern for mergers resulting in potentially higher costs to patients, but in this case, having Santiam Hospital and their exceptional staff available within a 20-minute drive meant no ambulance or helicopter transfer to a larger hospital that was more than hour from our home, no added stress for my family and most importantly, my son.

When COVID hit, there was constant talk about not having enough beds for the critically ill. In planning for the future, please consider the current outbreaks of measles due to lower vaccination rates. Will there be enough hospital beds for those children? Small community hospitals are critical in relieving stress from larger systems.

Considering the fact both Salem Health and Santiam Hospital are non-profits; these entities exist solely for the purpose of caring for and giving back to their communities. I implore you to consider how many lives each of these hospital systems touch on a daily basis and then imagine a day where that safety and security is gone for our rural members because this merger was not approved. Consider the hundreds of employees that provide that care, and what taking that away would do for their families.

Please approve the emergency request for this merger. Our communities depend on it.

Thank you,

Britni Ryan

Jefferson, Oregon

8. 7/10/26

As an employee of Santiam Memorial Hospital, I wholeheartedly request that OHA approve the emergency exemption for the affiliation with Salem Health. At this time, Santiam is experiencing great difficulties; should the hospital become insolvent, then thousands of individuals across the entire canyon will be massively negatively

affected. Patients will be forced to seek care at clinics outside of the canyon area, there won't be a hospital local to cities such as Mill City or Aumsville. The consequences of this will be devastating; I have spoken with an uncountable amount of patients during my time as an employee who have expressed their gratitude at having a hospital in Stayton. They have outlined the convenience of not needing to drive further for medical care, they have expressed great satisfaction with the care they receive at our clinics and emergency room; Santiam Memorial Hospital is a great boon to the local area and to lose it would be create yet another massive barrier to patient care that patients do not deserve.

Nicholas Ivers

9. 7/10/26

If you allow Salem Health to purchase Santiam people will die as a direct result period. [removed]. [removed]. Do not allow all of Marion County to be without emergency department and hospital care not owned by Salem Health. Unless they hold a Moda insurance plan, nobody else in the entire county will be able to access hospital care if this deal goes through. I already personally know myself and dozens of other people who have fully stopped accessing healthcare in the Salem area because we can no longer find any clinics that take our insurance plans and are also accepting new patients. I guarantee if you conducted a survey of the Salem community you would find hundreds if not thousands of people who have not been able to access healthcare since the end of BCBS and PacificSource coverage in the Salem Health system. [removed]

Ken

10. 7/10/26

This is Laurie Craftmore I am currently a resident in Salem Oregon and I just wanted to voice my opinion with regard to the sale of Santiam Hospital to Salem health. Unfortunately I have Blue Cross and I'm unable to get services at Salem Health so I already have to travel to Santiam Hospital in order to receive services so if Salem Health were to purchase Santiam Hospital I would then have over an hour drive to be able to find emergency healthcare well they'll pick up the cost of emergency healthcare if they deem it to be emergency, but I will have to travel over an

hour to seek healthcare for anything else so I oppose letting them go without a full review from the Oregon Health Care Association thank you bye bye.

11. 7/10/26

To the Oregon Health Authority,

I understand that Salem Health and Santiam Hospital are asking the Oregon Health Authority to grant an emergency exemption to expedite their proposed merger.

I'm concerned that a decision with such significant, long-term consequences for patients and consumers could be rushed through without the full review it deserves. Hospital mergers can affect healthcare costs, patient choice and access to care for years to come.

The hospitals initially described this as a long-term partnership. Now they are asking OHA to treat it as an emergency because of Santiam Hospital's financial condition. Those claims deserve careful scrutiny before an emergency exemption is granted.

Please require a thorough, transparent review of this proposal and ensure any decision doesn't harm patients.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

The comment was submitted by the following individuals:

Scott Kennedy

Gina Williams

Diana Saxon

Robin Bochsler

Keith Lonborg

Maureen Escalderon

Anna Salgado

Michelle Williams

Tina Mulkey

Carma Desantis

Curt Eggleston

Daniel Potter

William Lynn

Scott Kennedy

Pam Krober

Anna Salgado

Teresa Beill

Kevin Muniz

Carol Colton

Karen Hansson

Laury Creyaufmiller

Cassandra Fallis

Carol Shaw-Slife

Ruth Garrett

12. 7/10/26

I support the emergency exemption for the Salem Health and Santiam Hospital merger because I believe it is the best way to protect health care in our community.

I work for Salem Health, and my wife works for Santiam Hospital. Because of that, I've seen how dedicated the employees at both organizations are and how much they care about their patients.

From my perspective, this merger is about making sure Santiam Hospital has the support it needs to continue serving our community. If the hospital is struggling financially, waiting through a long approval process could put important services at

risk. That could mean longer drives for emergency care and fewer local health care options for families in the Santiam Canyon and surrounding areas.

I understand that some people have concerns about hospital mergers, and those concerns deserve to be considered. At the same time, I believe keeping a local hospital open and able to provide quality care is the most important issue right now.

I hope the emergency exemption is approved so the two organizations can move forward with providing stability, protecting local health care services, and supporting the employees who care for patients every day.

Parker Demig

13. 7/10/26

Yes I'm calling about Santiam Hospital and Clinics. That hospital is a much needed commodity for the area. I hope that they, you assist them in however you can to keep the hospital in Stayton open. Thank you.

14. 7/11/26

To the Health Care Market Oversight Program Review Team,

I am writing to submit formal public comment regarding Transaction #079, the proposed merger between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital & Clinics. As a local resident and a former employee who worked in Materials Management/Purchasing at Santiam Hospital, I strongly urge the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to deny the hospitals' request for an Emergency Exemption from comprehensive review.

The OHA is legally mandated to evaluate how this consolidation impacts corporate governance, health equity, and cost containment. Santiam Hospital's leadership claims that their "imminent insolvency" is an unavoidable emergency. However, during my time as a Distribution Tech and later managing the Materials Management department (as a Distribution Tech), I witnessed firsthand that the hospital's financial distress is deeply tied to chronic internal mismanagement, unqualified leadership, and irresponsible spending.

During my employment, I directly witnessed and experienced the following systemic failures:

- **Gross Financial Mismanagement & Irresponsible Spending:** I witnessed ongoing, reckless spending patterns. Funding was consistently misallocated due to leadership in charge of the department who possessed no qualifications or baseline experience in purchasing or supply chain services.
- **Compromised Supply Chain and Patient Safety:** Because of leadership's lack of expertise, I was tasked with the immense responsibility of locating, authorizing, and substituting critical medical supplies when vendors faced shortages. Operating a medical supply chain without qualified management introduced massive operational risks, directly compromising patient safety and standard-of-care medical treatment.
- **Hostile Work Environment and Discrimination:** In addition to these operational failures, I faced persistent discrimination that ultimately resulted in a constructive discharge, forcing me to leave my position.

A hospital cannot claim external economic victimization when it actively chose to place unqualified individuals in control of its major spending and supply assets. Transferring this system to Salem Health via a rushed emergency shortcut bypasses the exact transparency needed to hold this leadership accountable.

If the OHA does not deny the emergency track entirely, I urgently request that the state impose the following binding, mandatory conditions upon Salem Health as part of any approval:

1. **Independent Forensic Financial & Supply Chain Audit:** Mandate an immediate, third-party forensic audit of Santiam Hospital's purchasing history, asset management, and vendor contracts to correct systemic wasting.
2. **Leadership Qualification Guardrails:** Require that all individuals placed in leadership or management over operational, financial, and clinical departments meet strict, standardized professional certifications and experience metrics.
3. **Civil Rights Compliance Oversight:** Require Salem Health to completely overhaul the human resources, anti-discrimination policies, and internal reporting mechanisms at Santiam facilities.

Thank you for your commitment to protecting Oregon patients, healthcare workers, and public transparency.

Sincerely,

Former Distribution Tech and Materials Management Specialist, Santiam Hospital

15. 7/12/26

My name is Bill Randall. I work in the maintenance department at The Packaging Corporation of America corrugated paper box plant in Salem. I also serve as the President of our local union, the AWPPW Local 396. I represent 106 members. We are covered by BCBS for our medical insurance. It has been more than a year since Salem Health has stopped accepting BCBS. The emergency exemption request for the merger between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital must be denied. I question the timing of this request, and the back door attempt of Salem health to avoid the comprehensive review process. I think Salem Health saw the writing on the wall as the comprehensive review progressed. The community rising up and protesting the merger. If Santiam Hospital is so underwater and financially insolvent then why is Salem Health in such a hurry to buy it. Salem Health already holds a monopoly of health care in the region. I was kicked out of the Doctor's office I'd been going to for 30 years when Salem health stopped taking bcbs. This merger will have the same effect for the many employees I represent that utilize Santiam Hospital now that we are not allowed at Salem Health facilities. Our union recording secretary and myself both had knee surgery some years ago. We both got referred from our doctors office, owned by Salem Health. Had MRIs, at Salem Health facilities. We were sent to Hope orthopedic, owned by Salem health. We had our surgeries at State street surgical center, owned by Salem Health. We both went through rehabilitation at Hope Rehab, owned by Salem Health. We can no longer use any of those facilities. This year my secretary needed a knee replacement. Santiam Hospital provided all the services he received from Salem Health last time. This merger would prevent this access should I ever need it. Salem Health's contention that Santiam Hospitals contract with BCBS would remain intact is of little comfort. It would just be a matter of time. While BCBS covered members are allowed to utilize emergency services at Salem Hospital, we don't. We go to Santiam, Silverton, or Corvallis. Yes we are allowed emergency room access, but what happens when we need to be admitted to the hospital. For that reason, we can't really use Salem Health. Please deny this emergency exemption request. It would only remove access for my members and consolidate Salem Health's monopoly of health care in the area.

16. 7/12/26

Yes my name is Deborah and I had seen where there is an issue going on about Salem

Health wanting to take over Santiam Hospital. You guys need to leave them alone, they are a great facility, people can go there and get great care. Where if Salem health takes it over that's not going to happen. With Salem Health the quality goes down, it's just not a good thing, Salem Health is based on greed, where Santiam Hospital actually cares about the patients. Please don't force them into this. Thank you.

17. 7/13/26

I strongly support the proposed partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital & Clinics and urge OHA to approve the emergency exemption request.

Rural healthcare is critically important to the residents of the Santiam Canyon and surrounding communities. Maintaining local access to emergency services, primary care, specialty care, and other essential healthcare services should be a priority for all involved. Based on the information that has been shared publicly, Santiam Hospital is facing significant financial challenges that threaten its long-term sustainability as an independent organization.

This partnership represents an opportunity to preserve and strengthen healthcare access in the Canyon rather than risk the loss or reduction of services that many families rely upon. By joining a larger not-for-profit health system, Santiam Hospital can gain the financial stability, operational support, and technology investments necessary to continue serving its community for years to come.

Delaying approval could further jeopardize the hospital's financial position and create uncertainty for patients, caregivers, and the broader community. I believe this partnership is in the best interest of Canyon residents and will help ensure continued access to high-quality local healthcare.

I respectfully encourage OHA to approve the emergency exemption request and support this partnership so that essential healthcare services remain available and sustainable for generations to come.

Samuel Badgley

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 emergency exemption request for the proposed partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital, and to be direct about what is at stake: without this exemption, Santiam Hospital faces significant and immediate viability concerns, and the communities it serves depend on a resolution that keeps local care accessible.

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. That commitment extends beyond the walls of our facilities, and it is precisely why I feel compelled to speak urgently in support of this exemption. When a hospital is at risk of closing, the consequences for patients are immediate and profound. Seamless transitions, coordinated care, and connected support systems do not exist without a hospital to anchor them. Granting this emergency exemption preserves all of that, and more.

Every day, I am reminded that health care is not a service, it is a relationship. We are caring for our neighbors, our families, our friends, and one another. The nurses and clinical staff at Santiam show up with that same sense of purpose. Losing Santiam would sever that relationship for an entire community, leaving canyon residents without a local place to turn in their most vulnerable moments. This exemption is not simply about a business transaction. It is about protecting people's access to care close to home, when they need it most.

The urgency of this request reflects the very real pressures small, independent rural hospitals face today. Workforce challenges, financial sustainability, and rural access to care are not distant concerns; they are the daily realities Santiam's teams navigate, often without the infrastructure or resources to address them alone. Santiam has reached a critical threshold. Without the support structure a partnership with Salem Health provides, its ability to remain operational is genuinely in jeopardy. From my vantage point leading nursing and clinical operations, I understand what it means when a rural hospital loses its footing. The impact is felt immediately, by patients who

must travel farther, by staff who lose their professional home, and by a community that loses something it cannot easily replace.

We have seen what thoughtful collaboration can accomplish. Salem Health's partnership with West Valley Hospital in Dallas expanded bed capacity, brought new specialty services to the community, and strengthened local access to care in ways that would not have been possible for a small rural hospital operating independently. Santiam deserves that same lifeline, and this emergency exemption is what makes it possible.

Equally important is what this exemption preserves. Salem Health is a locally governed, nonprofit organization, and that distinction matters. Decisions are made by people who live and work in this region, with the mission of serving this community. At a time when rural health care access is increasingly fragile across the country, keeping that governance local and keeping Santiam's doors open is not just important. It is urgent.

I respectfully urge you to act swiftly on this emergency exemption request. The canyon communities Santiam serves are counting on this exemption to ensure continued access to the local care they depend on.

Respectfully,

Sarah Horn, RN

Senior Vice President and Chief Nursing and Clinical Operations Officer

Salem Health Hospitals and Clinics

19. 7/13/26

HCMO Board,

In this time of corporate healthcare, I appreciate your careful deliberation over the merger of Salem and Santiam Hospital systems.

The reality is that small hospitals/systems are no longer sustainable in the healthcare market. Costs continue to go up and reimbursement is going down.

Small hospitals are closing, all over the country. Those that remain open must reduce services. One of the first areas to be cut is maternity care. Please consider the

women of Santiam canyon. Currently they have a safe and convenient place to give birth. If Santiam Hospital is forced to close, the families of our community will have to travel an hour or more to deliver. Can you imagine wave after wave of contractions while driving a long distance to the hospital? Barriers to prenatal care, such as distance, are closely tied to poor outcomes.

On behalf of the women, infants and families of Santiam Canyon. Please allow us to keep our doors open. A merger with Salem will allow for expanded services, not a restriction. It is the right thing for Marion county.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Fields CNM

20. 7/13/26

To Whom It May Concern,

I work at the Santiam Medical Clinic in Mill City. Should the medical entities merging be delayed or denied, thus causing Santiam Hospital & Clinic to cease to exist, I can tell you that the loss of medical care in Mill City and the surrounding communities will be extremely detrimental to the health and welfare of our patients.

I have patients that live as far east as Idanha, a one-way 30 minute drive, in good weather. The forced closure of our hospital and clinic will cause an extreme hardship to them by doubling their drivetime to Salem. This will also put even more financial strain on their limited budgets, by increased gas and vehicle prices, not to mention the treacherous drive they endure during inclement weather. I have several patients that have no transportation, but since they live close, they can walk to the clinic. They will not easily be able to get to medical care, as already evidenced by challenges we have assisting them in getting rides to Salem for specialty care.

I respectfully implore you to approve the merger with Salem Hospital, for the sake, safety, and health of our patients, not to mention the mutually beneficial opportunities that this merger will bring to both of our systems, but more importantly to our patients.

Thank you for your time.

Lynn Gower, DO

Family Medicine

Santiam Medical Clinic (Mill City) of Santiam Hospital and Clinics

21. 7/13/26

To the Oregon Health Authority Health Care Market Oversight Program:

I submit this public comment to ask OHA to approve the emergency exemption request related to the proposed transaction between Salem Health Hospitals & Clinics and Santiam Hospital & Clinics. I appreciate OHA's role in reviewing health care market transactions carefully, but I also urge the agency to weigh the immediate, time-sensitive, and practical impact that a delay or loss of services would have on the Santiam Canyon and surrounding rural communities.

I am an employee of Santiam Hospital & Clinics, and that role does inform my perspective because I see the operational realities and community impact of local health care every day. I am also submitting this comment as a community member, patient, and parent who deeply cares about health care access in the Santiam Canyon. My family and I have received care through Santiam's primary care clinics, specialty care clinics, emergency room, outpatient hospital services, and inpatient services. I have seen firsthand how important it is for patients and families to have access to local care when they need it.

Access to local health care in the Santiam Canyon is not simply a convenience, it is a critical part of the region's safety net. We are facing a time when access to health care is already difficult for many patients and families, and when barriers become too great, people may delay needed care until their condition becomes more serious or emergent. Santiam Hospital provides hospital-based care, clinic access, emergency services, behavioral health care, and rural ambulance support in communities where geography, transportation, age, income, and medical need already make care harder to reach. If these services were reduced or lost, patients would be forced to travel farther for emergency care, maternity care, diagnostic services, behavioral health support, and ongoing clinic-based care. In all health care, but especially true in rural communities, added travel time is not just an inconvenience; it can change outcomes.

Santiam's impact also extends beyond individual medical visits through community-based support, outreach, and local partnerships, including Service Integration Team (SIT) efforts. With multiple teams working across different communities and connecting with school districts, local resource organizations, faith-based organizations, and other partners, this work helps connect people to resources and strengthens the safety net for the Santiam Canyon.

That reality is personal for me as well. Over the last few years, I have had to bring my own children into the emergency department. Being approximately 12 minutes away from the closest emergency department instead of 30 minutes away makes a very real difference when you are a concerned parent trying to get care quickly. Families in the Santiam Canyon deserve to have that kind of access preserved.

I also believe the future of Santiam Hospital should include meaningful local leadership and community accountability. Santiam Hospital has long been rooted in the communities it serves. Preserving local input, relationships, and leadership that understands the Santiam Canyon should be a key consideration in this process. For rural communities, local leadership is not just governance, it is how community needs, access barriers, and practical realities stay visible in decision-making. Across health care, communities are increasingly concerned when hospital decisions are moved farther away from the patients, staff, providers, employers, and local partners most directly affected. A partnership that preserves access while retaining local voice and responsiveness is far preferable to a future where the hospital becomes vulnerable to closure, sale, or outside control without the same community commitment.

Separate from the immediate rural access concerns specific to Santiam Hospital and the Santiam Canyon, I also encourage OHA to keep in mind that hospital stability is affected by many broader pressures, including workforce shortages, inflation, rising supply and drug costs, regulatory requirements, aging infrastructure, changing patient needs, and payer practices. Payer behavior is not the only cause of hospital instability, but it is one factor that can affect whether local services remain sustainable.

Examples of payer practices that can create access or reimbursement barriers include:

- Site-of-care restrictions: Policies such as Regence's site-of-care framework that was implemented this year can leave patients with little opportunity to receive surgical procedures, including orthopedic, general surgery, women's health and screening

procedures, in a hospital outpatient setting, even when that setting may be the most appropriate, accessible, or operationally realistic option for the patient and provider.

- Authorization delays and denials: Prior authorization requirements that delay care, create administrative burden, and place hospitals and providers in the position of repeatedly justifying medically appropriate services, including behavioral health services where timely access is especially important.
- Emergency department downcoding: Post-service payer reviews, including reviews supported by automated or AI-driven tools that may not fully review the patient chart, that reduce emergency department visit levels after care has already been provided, even though hospitals must maintain 24/7 readiness and treat patients based on presenting symptoms and clinical need.
- Appeals controlled by the payer: Reconsideration processes that are filtered through the payer's own internal rules, making it extremely difficult for providers to obtain meaningful review when payment is reduced or denied.

I raise these payer examples not to shift the focus away from the emergency exemption request, but to emphasize that rural access is fragile and is affected by many forces outside the walls of the hospital. A hospital can work to pull every available lever internally, reducing costs, improving efficiencies, increasing appropriate reimbursement, and minimizing financial exposure, but outside forces can be just as impactful on whether services remain sustainable. As OHA evaluates this transaction, I ask that payer practices be considered only as one part of the broader access and stability environment facing Oregon hospitals.

I respectfully ask OHA to approve the emergency exemption so rural health care can be maintained for the Santiam Canyon and surrounding communities. Approval would help preserve timely access to emergency care, outpatient services, clinic-based care, behavioral health support, ambulance services, and the local relationships that are essential to a rural health system. I also ask OHA to consider expectations that support meaningful local leadership, continued community accountability, and the long-term viability of care close to home. This transaction should be viewed not only through a market lens, but through the lens of rural health access, emergency readiness, and community stability.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment.

Sincerely,

Cassandra Posvar Martinez

Employee, community member, patient, and parent in the Santiam Canyon community

22. 7/13/26

Please help keep our doors open. this is huge to our community

Bridgette Lyon

23. 7/13/26

I am supporting Santiam Hospital & Clinics in anyway I can.

Rachel Ridings

24. 7/13/26

I do think that when insolvency of a locally owned and operated hospital is at stake, then prompt attention should be brought to the matter by the OHA. Especially since if the deal between Santiam Hospital and Salem Health does not go through, it is highly likely that Santiam will be forced to merge with an out-of-state healthcare organization or close its doors. So far it does not appear that the OHA has considered thoroughly the necessity for promptness in this matter.

Michael Matthews

25. 7/13/26

Please expedite this partnership as the benefits outweigh the adverse effects. This, community needs Salem Hospital to grow and provide advanced health care to this community.

Sheree Marquardt-Frazier

26. 7/13/26

I am an employee of Santiam hospital and work directly in patient care in the prehospital setting, I have worked in the willamette valley for 7 years and have been transporting to Salem since that start. I have been working at Santiam for 3 years now and am in a lead paramedic position. I strongly believe a merger between Santiam and

Salem is and will be the most devastating thing for patients in the area. We already see this now with a huge gap of patients unable to be treated there due to insurance or money reasons. I believe allowing these 2 entities to merge would cause the greatest monopolization of healthcare in the willamette valley ever and thousands of patients and providers will be the only ones experiencing these issues on the frontlines while these businesses pad their pockets. From someone who cares deeply, this merger is unacceptable. Please reach out with questions or concerns

Konnor Severson

27. 7/13/26

To the Oregon Health Authority,

I am writing to express my unequivocal support for Salem Health's request for an emergency exemption to complete its merger with Santiam Hospital.

As a local townspeople and patient of Santiam Hospitals & Clinics, I have had a front-row seat to the deterioration of an organization that was once a thriving, respected rural healthcare institution. Santiam Hospital faithfully served its community for decades. However, over the past six years, repeated executive leadership changes have resulted in an organization that has been driven into financial and operational crisis.

In my opinion and based on my firsthand experience, this decline was not inevitable. It was the result of executive mismanagement, poor financial stewardship, irresponsible spending decisions, and repeated failures in organizational leadership. Resources were not managed appropriately, strategic decisions lacked sound fiscal oversight, and executive priorities often failed to align with the long-term sustainability of the hospital or the needs of its employees and patients.

I also witnessed serious deficiencies within the Human Resources department that contributed to an unhealthy organizational culture, inconsistent employment practices, and the loss of highly qualified staff. These leadership failures created an environment where experienced employees left, morale deteriorated, and trust in the organization's leadership steadily eroded.

Despite these challenges, the physicians, nurses, therapists, technicians, support staff, and countless other frontline employees continued to provide exceptional care to the

community. The failure of Santiam Hospital was never the failure of its caregivers—it was the failure of executive leadership to responsibly manage and protect the organization entrusted to them.

I also believe this merger presents an opportunity for Salem Health to establish a new foundation of accountable, transparent, and effective qualified leadership. Meaningful organizational recovery will require more than financial investment—it will require a comprehensive evaluation of the existing leadership structure and the willingness to make necessary leadership changes where performance has contributed to the hospital's decline. A successful turnaround depends on placing experienced, ethical, and patient-centered leaders in positions where they can rebuild employee trust, restore organizational culture, improve fiscal responsibility, and refocus the hospital on its core mission of providing exceptional care to the community. In my view, Salem Health has the experience and organizational strength to make those difficult but necessary decisions and lead Santiam Hospital toward a great future.

Without intervention, I believe the future of healthcare access for the Santiam Canyon and surrounding rural communities remains at significant risk. Salem Health has demonstrated the financial stability, operational expertise, clinical leadership, and organizational structure necessary to rebuild what has been lost. This merger provides the best opportunity to restore community confidence, stabilize the workforce, improve patient care, and preserve essential healthcare services for thousands of Oregonians.

The Oregon Health Authority has an opportunity to support not only the survival of a rural hospital but also the restoration of a healthcare institution that has served this region for generations. Delaying this merger would only prolong uncertainty for employees, providers, patients, and the communities that depend on Santiam Hospital.

I respectfully urge the Oregon Health Authority to approve Salem Health's emergency exemption request without delay. The community deserves stable leadership, responsible stewardship of healthcare resources, and a sustainable future for its local hospital. I firmly believe Salem Health is the organization best equipped to provide that future.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

Concerned Citizen

28. 7/13/26

The canyon needs Santiam Hospital to stay in the area. There is too many people, patients to absorb elsewhere. Emergency services are not optional in this area without the hospital

Jamie Broussard

29. 7/13/26

I have worked at Santiam for over two years, and during that time I have seen firsthand the dedication of our hospital, staff, and providers to caring for our community and serving those in need.

I have also witnessed the significant strain this review process has placed on our organization. I believe it is in the best interest of the Oregon Health Authority to expedite its review so our affiliation with Salem can move forward without creating additional financial hardship or uncertainty.

Without a timely decision, I am concerned about the future of our small-town hospital. The increasing demands of insurance requirements, our growing community, and critical infrastructure needs make it difficult to sustain and expand the services our patients rely on. Moving forward with this affiliation is an important step toward ensuring the long-term stability of our hospital and preserving access to quality health care for the community we serve.

Melissa Slate

30. 7/13/26

I've worked at Santiam Hospital for almost 25 years. I started in 2002, and in that time I've watched this hospital hold a community together — not in the abstract, but one patient at a time.

I work in our Wound & Infusion Center. My patients come in multiple times a week — some fighting infections on IV antibiotics that could cost them a limb, some with chronic wounds that need consistent, hands-on care to heal instead of worsen. Many of them come down from the Santiam Canyon and the small towns east of us, already driving a long way to reach the closest care there is. If Santiam weren't here, some of them simply wouldn't make it to their appointments. I've seen what happens when care is out of reach: wounds that don't close, infections that spread, people who quietly give

up. Local access isn't a talking point to me. It's the difference between healing and decline, and I watch it play out every single day.

That's why I'm asking the Oregon Health Authority to act quickly on this emergency exemption application. This isn't a routine business filing to the people who work here or the patients we serve — it's about whether a rural hospital that has held this community up for decades will still be standing to do it tomorrow. Every week of delay is a week of uncertainty for patients who have no backup plan.

I've given a quarter century of my career to Santiam because I believe in what it does for this community. The affiliation with Salem Health is our path to keep doing it. I respectfully ask OHA for a timely decision.

Thank you for reading this, and for the care I know you're bringing to it.

— Louis McAllister, LPN, Santiam Wound & Infusion Center (SWIC)

31. 7/13/26

To whom it may concern, I am reaching out as an employee of Santiam hospital and as a newer citizen of the state of Oregon. I moved to Oregon from Idaho almost 5 months ago to work for Santiam Hospital. I am the HR Generalist, and I have personal experience of merging smaller or rural hospital with a larger hospital. While I understand the drama that Blue Cross is putting up, I want to express how important this merger is if you allow it to happen. Denying the merger and access to healthcare expansion is a huge injustice to the residence of this area. The hundreds of thousands of patients now needing to travel more than an hour to receive healthcare will cause an increase in deaths across the area, put more employees at risk for their safety if patients become more agitated due to the increasingly longer wait times, removing thousands of jobs that feed the economy, and cause patients to have to choose how important their health or life is over the soaring cost a larger hospital charges them. I have personally witnessed this in Idaho and California. Idaho allowed the major hospital to come in and merge with the rural locations to provide affordable healthcare, access to more providers, and overall patient and employee satisfaction. The merger in Idaho created more jobs for the community which in turn feeds the economy. I wish I could say the same about California. From the employee standpoint we need this merger to increase jobs which feeds the economy and puts our stakeholders in a more comfortable position to invest. We will also have more access to the ever-growing

world of technology that comes with practicing medicine. I ask you to set the politics aside and look at the facts. Look at what happened in Idaho and look at what's happening in California. I ask that you choose patients over drama fueled companies who only care about greed and lining their pockets. Please consider allowing the merger to happen and for community healthcare to increase.

Taylor Walker

32. 7/13/26

I'm writing as the wife of a Santiam Hospital nurse and as a member of this community.

My husband has worked at Santiam for almost 25 years — he was already several years into his career there when we met, and in the 18 years since, I've watched him come home from the Wound & Infusion Center carrying the weight of his patients. Worrying about the ones whose wounds weren't healing. Celebrating quietly when someone finally turned a corner. Santiam isn't just where he works. It's woven into our family's life, and into the lives of nearly every family we know in this area.

I work in healthcare too, on the insurance side, so I understand better than most how fragile small hospitals are right now. I see the financial machinery of this industry every day, and I know what happens to communities when a rural hospital can't hold on: services disappear one by one, then the hospital itself, and suddenly people are driving long distances for care they used to get down the road. The patients who suffer most are the ones with the fewest options — the elderly, people without reliable transportation, families already stretched thin.

Santiam and Salem Health have found a path forward together. The emergency exemption they've filed reflects how urgent the situation has become. I'm asking the Oregon Health Authority to please treat it with that urgency. Behind this application are real nurses, real patients, and real families — including mine — waiting to know whether this hospital will be secure.

Please give this community a timely decision. We're counting on it.

Carole McAllister, Salem, Oregon

33. 7/13/26

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 who receive care at Santiam. I submit this comment from both a professional and personal perspective.

Over the past nine years, I have had the privilege of helping build programs that connect health care, social services, and community resources to improve the well-being of our region. I have witnessed firsthand the critical role Santiam plays in the lives of thousands of individuals and families.

Today, I am writing because I believe the proposed affiliation between Santiam Hospital & Clinics and Salem Health is urgently needed.

As someone deeply invested in the future of our community, I recognize the seriousness of Santiam's current financial circumstances. The emergency exemption request reflects the reality that prompt action is needed to preserve local health care services and ensure a sustainable future for the communities we serve.

This affiliation creates a pathway to long-term sustainability while preserving local access to care for the people and communities who depend on Santiam. It will strengthen infrastructure, support care coordination, expand access to specialty services, and help ensure patients and families across our region can continue receiving high-quality care close to home.

As someone who serves this community professionally and relies on this hospital personally, I support approval of the proposed affiliation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Melissa Baurer

34. 7/13/26

My name is Jenn Fowler. I'm Vice President of Finance and Service Line Operations at Salem Health, and I've been here 21 years. That's given me a close view of how this organization makes decisions, and why this transaction has turned into an emergency.

Salem Health doesn't grow just to grow, we've expanded to keep care close to home for the people who need it. West Valley Hospital in Dallas is a good example. So is the 180-bed tower we built as our population grew and aged. So are the primary care and

specialty practices we've taken on rather than watch them close their doors. Because of that, people in Marion and Polk Counties can see a specialist without driving an hour or waiting months for an appointment. Santiam is that same kind of opportunity. But this time, we don't have the luxury of moving slowly.

Santiam's financial situation has gotten worse, fast, and what started as a long-term partnership is now an emergency. Santiam is at real risk of insolvency, and every month that passes is a month with fewer options for keeping care in the Canyon intact. There's also a hard deadline with Santiam's Electronic Health Record (EHR) contract running out in 2027, which means the switch to a new system has to start this fall, and Santiam doesn't have the money to do that alone. Put simply, without an EHR, there will be no hospital.

Health care isn't just a transaction, it's a relationship, and it's one Santiam's community depends on every day. Losing that hospital doesn't just mean a longer drive. It means a community loses the place it turns to in its hardest moments. It's also one of the Canyon's largest employers, imagine the devastation of losing your healthcare access and your job at the same time. Salem Health can give Santiam the resources and infrastructure it needs to get through this and come out stable, the same way we did for West Valley. I strongly support the partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital and Clinics, and I'm asking the Oregon Health Authority to move quickly and approve it.

Jenn Fowler

35. 7/13/26

I am a patient of Santiam Hospital I am looking forward to Salem Health coming to Stayton it will open up a lot of opportunities for the community

Mindy Tomlin

36. 7/13/26

1. It would be catastrophic for our Stayton, Scio, Santiam Canyon and surrounding areas, to be without healthcare from Santiam Hospital and Clinics. Our communities rely on Santiam Hospital and Clinics for their Healthcare. Some our patients walk to appts, some don't have transportation.

2. For the Employees at Santiam Hospital and Clinics, you may be looking at a "Ghost town", if all these employees lost employment in Stayton.

Economy thrives when the employees are employed!!! When employees are employed, they have healthcare insurance, as well. It is a domanian effect.

Amy Fischer

37. 7/13/26

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 continued support for the proposed partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital, now that it is proceeding through an emergency exception and returning for public comment.

While I've always recognized the value of this partnership, the emergency exception and the events surrounding it have underscored just how essential it is to our community in the Santiam Canyon.

In my role overseeing Revenue Cycle, I understand firsthand how much work goes into merging two health systems well: aligning technology, staffing, billing, and countless operational details takes real time. That is why I believe timely approval of the emergency exception is essential to protecting high-quality care for patients in the canyon.

I have seen Salem Health's commitment to this community, both as an employee and as a patient, and that is why I trust this organization to carry out a partnership of this scale thoughtfully and with the best interest of the community in mind. The health care landscape is challenging right now (rising costs, workforce shortages, and reimbursement difficulties), and those challenges are exacerbated for providers serving rural communities. This partnership protects patients' access to local, quality health care and I believe it is a positive direction for our community.

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

Sincerely,

Erica Puopolo

On behalf of the Stayton Sublimity Chamber of Commerce, I am writing to express our strong support for the proposed partnership between Salem Health Hospitals & Clinics and Santiam Hospital & Clinics.

The Chamber has a long-standing and collaborative partnership with both Santiam Hospital & Clinics and Salem Health Hospitals & Clinics, and we have seen firsthand the vital role the hospitals play in supporting not only the health of our residents, but also the economic stability of businesses throughout Stayton, Sublimity, the Santiam Canyon, and the surrounding Mid-Willamette Valley.

As an organization representing local employers and small businesses, we recognize that reliable access to high-quality, local health care is essential to workforce stability, employee well-being, and regional economic resilience. Disruptions to rural health services directly affect recruitment, retention, and productivity, particularly for employers competing for talent in a challenging labor market.

This proposed partnership represents a proactive and responsible response to the growing challenges facing rural health care, including workforce shortages, rising operational costs, and limited access to specialty services. By affiliating with Salem Health, Santiam Hospital & Clinics will be better positioned to attract and retain specialty providers that are currently difficult to recruit in rural communities.

From an economic development perspective, specialty providers do more than expand care access. They often relocate with their families, supporting local businesses, investing in housing, and strengthening our schools and community organizations. These ripple effects are critical to the long-term vitality of our region.

Importantly, this partnership allows Santiam Hospital & Clinics to strengthen services and sustainability while maintaining its nonprofit mission and local presence, which is deeply valued by our business community.

For these reasons, the Stayton Sublimity Chamber of Commerce supports approval of the proposed partnership by the Oregon Health Authority. We believe it is an important step in ensuring the continued health, stability, and economic vitality of our community and region.

Alisha Oliver, Board Chair Stayton Sublimity Chamber of Commerce

39. 7/13/26

I strongly support Santiam Hospital & Clinics and the vital role it plays in our community. Santiam provides local access to high-quality primary, specialty, emergency, and inpatient care, and preserving these services is essential for the health and well-being of the patients and families who rely on them every day.

Not only do I have the privilege of working at Santiam, but my family also receives their care here. I have seen firsthand the compassion, dedication, and exceptional care our providers and staff deliver. I support Santiam and Salem Health working together to strengthen local healthcare and ensure these essential services remain available. I want Santiam to continue serving our community for decades to come, ensuring future generations have access to high-quality care close to home. Supporting Santiam and Salem Health is an investment in the long-term health of our patients, our families, and the communities we serve.

Abbie Proctor

40. 7/13/26

I am not only an employee of Santiam Hospital and Clinics—I am also a patient. My entire family has established their care here. That gives me a unique perspective on what is at stake if our hospital were to close.

My concerns extend far beyond my own family. I worry about our entire community and the surrounding areas that depend on Santiam Hospital. We are the halfway point for many residents of the canyon communities. Some already struggle to travel here for appointments and medical care. Expecting them to drive to Salem, Silverton, or Albany would create an even greater burden. The added travel time, fuel costs, and stress could become overwhelming, especially for families who are already struggling financially. Sadly, I fear some people would delay or even forgo necessary medical care because they simply could not afford the extra expense.

I know many people have concerns about a potential monopoly. I encourage everyone to consider another perspective. An affiliation with Salem Health could provide Santiam with the support, stability, and resources we have needed for years. It could allow us to expand services that we have not been able to offer on our own while keeping the personalized care our patients value. Our providers, staff, and local location would remain the same, but our community could gain access to additional

specialty services closer to home. That means fewer trips to larger cities, shorter travel distances, less time away from work and family, and potentially shorter wait times for care.

Another concern I have heard is Salem Health's current contract dispute with Blue Cross Blue Shield. Insurance negotiations are an unfortunate reality across healthcare today. It may be Blue Cross Blue Shield now, but once that issue is resolved, another insurance company could present similar challenges. I do not believe we should base such an important decision solely on one insurance contract.

Some have argued that the affiliation should not move forward because Salem Health is not currently in network with Blue Cross Blue Shield. However, there is no guarantee Santiam would be able to maintain or renew its own contract indefinitely. The financial pressures facing hospitals today are driven in large part by inadequate insurance reimbursements. Insurance companies make financial decisions; our providers make healthcare decisions. The people caring for our community are committed to our health regardless of which insurance company is involved.

We also need to consider the alternative. If Santiam is unable to affiliate and our financial challenges continue, we could face closure. More than 750 employees would lose their jobs. Our community would lose its local hospital. The facilities would likely still be purchased by a larger healthcare system, but at that point our community would have little or no voice in the outcome. We would lose the opportunity to help shape the future of healthcare in our own community.

I believe we should choose the path that keeps healthcare local. Let us preserve our voices in this process. Let our patients continue receiving care from the providers and staff they know and trust. Let us strengthen Santiam Hospital so it can continue serving our families, our neighbors, and our canyon communities for generations to come.

Jodi Leimbach

41. 7/13/26

Santiam is an amazing place to work and a wonderful hospital. If this merge does not happen it will have a negative impact on the surrounding communities. They will have to drive 30 minutes to two hours for care. This is not sustainable for the residents of the canyon and our surrounding areas. Santiam has done everything to keep us

independent. Unfortunately the times we are currently in with reimbursement from insurances and the skyrocketing costs of everything this merge needs to happen with Salem.

Janet Walliman

42. 7/13/26

As part of this community, we cannot let Santiam go under. This would be a HUGE disservice to so many people. The hospitals and clinics in the area are busy enough, I can't imagine how much the wait times would grow and how much more overwhelmed doctors and staff will be.

Samantha Cancino

43. 7/13/26

The people in the canyon are part of our community, and deserve access to local healthcare. The financial deterioration articulated in the public emergency exemption is a clear case to OHA and the entire state to act swiftly to approve this transaction. Healthcare entities, especially small rural hospitals, have been struggling to generate enough of a bottom line to continue to reinvest for the future, and eventually it simply becomes insurmountable. What we are facing now is the potential closure of a critical healthcare system for the canyon communities, which is simply not acceptable. I hope OHA approves this swiftly to provide the lifeline that is critically needed. Thank you.

Reid Sund

44. 7/13/26

I am respectfully asking the Oregon Health Authority to approve the necessary merger between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital. The financial environment that Hospitals in the State are having to maneuverer just to keep their doors open is a large burden. With the passing of several House Bills by the legislature, inflation, and lower reimbursement rates from Insurance payors, hospitals have found themselves navigating through some of the most difficult times in their existence. We ask that you don't let the citizens, your fellow neighbors, and patients of Santiam Hospital be left without a medical facility to rely on. Please do the right thing for the community and approve the merger.

Thank you,

Dawn

45. 7/13/26

By combining strengths, expertise, and resources, this partnership has the potential to improve access to high-quality healthcare, enhance care coordination, and expand services for patients across the region. Both organizations share a commitment to patient-centered care and community health, and working together can help ensure sustainable, locally focused healthcare for years to come. I believe this collaboration will create new opportunities to strengthen clinical services, support caregivers, and better meet the growing healthcare needs of the populations we serve.

Mindy Hutchison

46. 7/13/26

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing in strong support of the emergency exemption request for Salem Health's acquisition of Santiam Hospital and Clinics.

As the Manager of Clinic Onboarding and Expansion at Salem Health Hospitals and Clinics, I have the privilege of working with clinics and teams across our organization to help build strong, connected systems of care. Every day I see the difference it makes when caregivers have the resources they need and patients can access care close to home.

This issue is also deeply personal to me. I grew up in rural Wilbur, Washington and relied on rural health clinics like Santiam and critical access hospitals like West Valley to maintain access to healthcare in communities like Polk County. I have seen firsthand how essential these facilities are to the health and stability of rural communities, and how important it is to preserve them.

This request isn't simply about one organization acquiring another. It's about protecting healthcare for the people who call the Santiam Canyon and surrounding communities home.

Rural hospitals are often the heart of their communities. They provide far more than medical care—they provide reassurance that help is nearby when it's needed most.

When a rural hospital is at risk, the effects ripple far beyond its walls. Families face longer drives for care, treatment can be delayed, healthcare professionals leave the community, and an essential community resource becomes increasingly difficult to replace.

Like many rural hospitals and private practices across the country, Santiam Hospital has faced significant financial and operational challenges. These aren't unique to Santiam, but they are very real. Partnerships like this one are becoming increasingly necessary to preserve access to care for our communities.

Salem Health is well positioned to provide that support. As a locally governed, nonprofit health system, our focus has always been on serving our communities. I've seen firsthand the value of bringing teams together, sharing resources, and creating stronger connections across our healthcare system. Those efforts ultimately benefit the people we serve. We work together, learn together, and care for our communities together. We can do this with Santiam Hospital and Clinics.

Approving this emergency exemption will help preserve local healthcare services, support the dedicated caregivers who serve these communities, and provide patients with greater confidence that they can continue receiving high-quality care close to home. Delaying this decision will only hurt the canyon.

I respectfully urge approval of this emergency exemption so that together we can protect and strengthen healthcare for the Santiam Canyon and the surrounding region for years to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Molly M. Rom

Manager, Clinic Onboarding and Expansion

Salem Health Hospitals and Clinics

Salem, Oregon

47. 7/13/26

I will preface this by stating I am employed at Santiam Hospital. I have been employed here for almost 9 years, first as a Paramedic and now as an ER technician. I've seen this hospital grow by leaps and bounds, I've seen it struggle financially some years and do better other years.

I strongly believe in Santiam Hospital and what we offer our community. I also strongly believe that the proposed merger is in the best interest of both facilities and the public. Declining revenues and what appears to be no solution to improving medical insurance payments is causing real financial heartache in hospitals across the country, but especially to small, rural hospitals. We must grow bigger or combine with other systems to survive.

This is why it is so critical that our merger request be approved.

Is everyone happy? No. Will everyone benefit? Again, no. But, the merger will be the best option for the greater population we serve. Much like the triage process, we must do what is beneficial for the greater good for our citizens.

Thank you.

Eric Augustus

48. 7/13/26

I've been an employee for SalemHealth for 11 years and see the commitment to patient care. Having friends and family in the canyon and knowing that without additional support this care could be in jeopardy. I am confident that with the support of SalemHealth and their leadership they can continue providing the care that this community deserves.

Andrew Frey

49. 7/13/26

I'm excited for this opportunity for Salem Health and Santiam to partner together. I think this will protect and strengthen access to care in the canyon.

Katelin Pippert

50. 7/13/26

I'm writing in support of Salem Health's emergency exemption application for the proposed partnership with Santiam Hospital & Clinics. As a Salem Health family physician who has worked closely with our regional care network, I've seen firsthand how fragile access to care can be in rural communities like the Santiam Canyon. Santiam Hospital & Clinics is a vital access point for residents who would otherwise face long drives for basic and emergency services. A stable, well-resourced partner is essential to keeping that access intact, and Salem Health has the clinical infrastructure, quality programs, and community commitment to sustain and strengthen care in the canyon for the long term. I urge OHA to approve this exemption so patients in the Santiam Canyon aren't left without reliable options during this critical transition period.

Michelle Rasmussen

51. 7/13/26

I've had the pleasure of working with Salem Health for the last 10 years. In the course of those 10 years, I have seen firsthand how important it is for our communities to have access to health care at every level possible. Thinking about the possible insolvency of Santiam, my heart broke with the thought of communities losing access to healthcare and the burden that it would cause healthcare facilities in surrounding areas. Patients deserve to have access to health care in their community.

The economy has also been difficult to navigate, and I can only imagine how Santiam's employees are feeling with the possibility of losing jobs.

The insolvency of Santiam will have a huge impact on patients, employees, and the community. As a state, we need a prompt solution that will not disrupt access to health care and merging with Salem Health is imperative in achieving this. I hope that a decision is reached that will have the best outcome for our communities.

Melina Cruz Martinez

52. 7/13/26

I am writing in strong support of the proposed partnership involving Santiam Hospital & Clinics and the requested emergency exemption currently under review by the Oregon Health Authority.

This partnership is critical to preserving access to health care services for residents of the Santiam Canyon and surrounding rural communities. While Santiam Hospital has remained deeply committed to serving local patients, its financial outlook continues to deteriorate, creating a substantial risk to the long-term viability of health care services in the region. Without timely action, Canyon residents could face reduced access to essential medical care and local emergency services.

The urgency of this request cannot be overstated. Any delay beyond the requested August 1 decision date increases the risk of insolvency and threatens the continuity of care for thousands of rural Oregonians. In addition, implementation of a new electronic health record system must begin by September 1 to ensure Santiam Hospital can maintain a functioning medical record platform beyond July 1, 2027. Failure to meet this timeline could create significant operational and patient care challenges.

This partnership aligns with the shared mission of improving the health and well-being of the people and communities served throughout the mid-Willamette Valley and Santiam Canyon. It represents a proactive solution that will strengthen health care access, preserve local not-for-profit services, and ensure patients continue to receive high-quality care close to home.

I respectfully urge the Oregon Health Authority to approve the emergency exemption. Prompt approval will help safeguard the future of rural health care in the Canyon and provide the stability needed to continue serving current and future generations of patients.

Thank you for your consideration.

Em J

53. 7/13/26

Please I ask that you, the Oregon Health Authority, to grant the emergency exemption requested by Santiam Hospital and Clinics and Salem Hospital to be able make, as quickly as possible, the affiliation between these 2 entities. The delay in this affiliation could cause a reduction in vital services to our rural communities that the Santiam Hospital and Clinics serve. These rural communities have just barely recovered from the devastating wildfire. The Santiam Hospital and Clinics were a great help with the emergent needs during the wildfire, and also in the long term recovery of such a catastrophic event. Please don't allow the reduction of vital services to these people

who have already been through a very difficult 6 years. We are just getting our lives back to normal and losing our healthcare support would cause another hardship to the people in these rural communities. Thank you for hearing from the community, and considering our needs as well.

Robin Hyslop

54. 7/13/26

Santiam Hospital is a trusted and valued facility in the canyon and surrounding areas; I trust that the board and administrators have put the best interest of the community first and foremost. OHA has had ample time to process this request and because of the lack of ability to do so, our hospital is now in a position where we may not have an EHR system. We do not have the funds to purchase a system nor the time it takes to get the system up and running. It is imperative that the Santiam/ Salem merger be allowed to move forward without OHA approval being needed. Our community depends on the quality care they receive at Santiam and we cannot risk losing that relationship.

Patti Silbernagel

55. 7/13/26

The announcement of the Emergency Exemption Application for the merger of Salem Health and Santiam hospitals came as a surprise, to many of us I'm sure. The issue of insolvency that Santiam is facing is truly a humanitarian crisis. There are over 65,000 people that rely on that hospital for medical and maternity care. If allowed to fulfill their insolvency and close their doors, that means all of those patients will be facing a minimum 1 hour drive for any type of emergency medical care.

How many babies will be born along the side of the road in a car? How many elderly or severely injured people have the potential of passing while attempting to make that commute? How can Salem Health not step in to alleviate that growing pressure the canyon is feeling? Especially when Santiam reached out and asked for the help.

I know how the majority of the Willamette Valley feels about Salem Health, swooping in, to ""monopolize"" all the health care venues. But that just isn't correct. How many medical facilities or hospitals would no longer be in existence if it weren't for Salem

Health stepping up and making room for everyone? I, personally, feel this merger is a necessity for 65,000 people and as such, should be approved with haste.

Amber

56. 7/13/26

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

As an infectious disease physician who cares for patients throughout the Mid-Willamette Valley, I have seen firsthand the critical role Santiam Hospital plays in delivering high-quality healthcare to residents of the Santiam Canyon and surrounding rural communities. Many of my patients rely on Santiam Hospital for essential medical services, and preserving access to local healthcare is vital to the health and well-being of this region.

Rural hospitals are the backbone of their communities. They provide not only emergency and inpatient care, but also preventive services, specialty care, and continuity of care for patients who would otherwise face significant barriers to accessing healthcare. For many individuals and families, traveling long distances for medical care is not feasible due to transportation challenges, financial constraints, age, or underlying medical conditions. Maintaining local access to healthcare is essential to ensuring timely diagnosis, treatment, and improved health outcomes.

Healthcare systems across Oregon and the nation continue to face unprecedented financial and operational pressures. Rural hospitals, in particular, have been disproportionately affected by workforce shortages, rising costs, and declining reimbursement. Strategic partnerships such as this merger are increasingly necessary to ensure the long-term sustainability of these essential community hospitals.

Santiam Hospital serves approximately 30,000 to 50,000 patients annually and is an indispensable healthcare resource for the Santiam Canyon and neighboring communities. By joining with Salem Health, Santiam Hospital will be better positioned to maintain and expand access to high-quality medical services while benefiting from the clinical expertise, operational resources, and financial stability of a larger integrated health system.

For these reasons, I strongly support the proposed merger between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital. I believe this partnership will enhance the delivery of healthcare, improve patient outcomes, and ensure that the residents of the Santiam Canyon and surrounding rural communities continue to receive the high-quality care they deserve for years to come.

Jasmin Chaudhary MD

57. 7/13/26

I think the requested transaction where Salem Health and Santiam become one is greatly beneficial. This would save the many thousands of people in the Santiam Canyon who would lose access to good and local healthcare while also hopefully bringing healthcare closer to those SH employees, who live closer to Santiam than our own employer. If Santiam were forced to close it's doors, this would also create a drastic termination of care that patient's are receiving and cause access to new providers that much more difficult as the closure would cause a flood of patient's entering a new healthcare system. This would create massive delays in care and treatment, and while some could be placed on a waitlist there are many who simply cannot be without timely care.

Kagen Harrison

58. 7/13/26

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. 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. The loss of Santiam Hospitals & Clinics would have a significant impact on the community. It would not only reduce access to essential healthcare services but would also result in the loss of hundreds of jobs, creating lasting economic and social consequences.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jennifer DeSantis

59. 7/13/26

Santiam Hospital is very important for the community and up the canyon. A lot of patients rave about how much they love this hospital and how convenient it is to come here to get help.

Renee Sydenstricker

60. 7/13/26

As a PA-C at Santiam Hospital and Clinics, I know that Salem Health and Santiam coming together will only benefit our patients and the community as a whole. Please approve this transaction so Santiam Hospital and Clinics can continue serving the best possible care to its communities.

Kimberly Edmonds

61. 7/13/26

While I sympathize with folks who currently have Regence insurance and understand their concerns with the potential merger, insurance contract statuses are temporary. Regence and Salem Health could come to an agreement and be in-network in the future. If Santiam closes its doors, where will the canyon residents receive care? How long would it take them to reach care in the event of an emergency? How will those increased volumes impact Salem Health, which already has an incredibly busy

emergency room? Costs are astronomical in building, materials, labor and healthcare; it seems unlikely that another local organization would step in and offer to take on the expenses to re-create canyon infrastructure in a time when healthcare access is shrinking and consolidating everywhere. For those showing outrage against Salem Health filling care gaps as local providers close, would you prefer a multi-state conglomerate take over instead? Please see what is happening with the Corvallis Samaritan hospital and their proposed Multi-Care affiliation if you aren't already aware, or Optum (United Healthcare) buying up all the primary care providers in Eugene, and the effect that's had on care access. The healthcare financial landscape is not healthy right now, and the smaller the organization, the harder it is to survive. I ask that the state approve so we can keep access to local care rather than losing it.

Susannah Metzger

62. 7/13/26

Santiam Hospital is very important to this community and has been for many years. The availability and patient care is unmatched. They have put a lot of effort into making improvements to support the needs of this community and are continually analyzing and reaching out to ensure needs are met. I wish Santiam Hospital could stand on their own, but in today's environment, it is not feasible. This affiliation with Salem Health allows Santiam to continue their care and to provide the services needed in the canyon. Please don't hesitate to make your decision and jeopardize this great asset we have available to us.

Denise Busch

63. 7/13/26

We need this approval for this very well maintained hospital and awesome staff with such great care for everyone and the community. We need to keep Santiam hospital open.

Andrea Rodriguez

64. 7/13/26

Please stop Salem Health from taking over Santiam Hospital. They have enough of a monopoly in our area! That they don't take Blue Cross insurance should be a serious concern.

65. 7/13/26

I am writing as a current employee of Santiam Hospital to express my strong support for the proposed merger. I have seen firsthand the important role Santiam plays in our community, and I believe this merger is essential to ensuring that quality healthcare remains available for the people we serve.

One of the most immediate consequences if Santiam Hospital were forced to close would be the loss of approximately 750 jobs. That would be devastating not only for those employees and their families but also for the local economy and the state's unemployment system. These are skilled healthcare professionals and support staff who have dedicated themselves to caring for our community.

While the economic impact is significant, the most compelling reason to support this merger is the health and safety of the people who live in the Santiam Canyon and surrounding rural communities. If Santiam Hospital closes, residents would lose local emergency care and ambulance services would be forced to transport patients to facilities at least 30 additional minutes away. In emergencies such as heart attacks, strokes, severe trauma, or other life-threatening conditions, those extra minutes can mean the difference between life and death. Access to timely emergency care is not a convenience—it is a necessity.

I have read many public comments suggesting that Salem Health's lack of a contract with Regence is solely the result of actions taken by Salem Health. I don't believe the situation is that simple. It is equally reasonable to ask whether Regence's reimbursement rates or negotiating position have contributed to the impasse. It is worth noting that Salem Health is not the only healthcare system in Oregon that has experienced difficulties reaching a contract with Regence. That suggests there may be broader issues involved than many people realize.

Decisions about this merger should be based on the long-term healthcare needs of our community.

This merger represents an opportunity to preserve local healthcare, protect hundreds of jobs, and ensure that residents of the Santiam Canyon continue to have access to emergency and hospital services close to home. I respectfully urge you to support this

merger for the benefit of our employees, our patients, and the communities that depend on Santiam Hospital every day.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Gillian Herndon

66. 7/13/26

Santiam Hospital is vital to our community. Please approve the merger so that we can continue to receive quality care close to home. Many of our residents, especially those east of Stayton, will suffer if this hospital closes.

Susan Masse

67. 7/13/26

Santiam and Salem Health should merge in order to serve the rural area. Santiam has a great orthopedic department and could add to services offered by Salem Health.

Sharon Crocker

68. 7/14/26

Good morning OHA,

I'd like folks to understand that maintaining access to Santiam for the Canyon residents is crucial. It should come as no surprise that these rural hospitals are impacted greatly with the exponential rise in healthcare expenses, lack of revenue, and inability to maintain a positive budget to meet debt obligations.

Total Revenue - Expenses = Net Profit/Net Loss

When Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement rates are not paying claims, underpaying, and facing cuts due to the current administration and Medicaid expansion faces cuts, that healthcare systems are operating below intended revenue; costs then continue for overall Expenses and how do you subtract that amount when your Revenue is already below the threshold?

Rural hospitals are hurting and WILL close; they rely on reimbursement rates to payback claims, as well as any other commercial payer group.

We need the community and OHA to support it, regardless of their feelings on Salem Health as a whole. Many of the 'bought out' clinics and practices are turning to Salem to remain afloat. If Santiam cannot operate, the Canyon faces increased risk and deteriorating health for its residents that rely on Santiam's current system. Salem absorbed an abundance of PacificSource patients who could no longer seek primary care at Salem Clinic due to their lapsed contract, which heavily increased the volume and wait times in the Emergency Department; many are still left without a primary care as they're waitlisted and nowhere is taking new patients... it's July and the calendar year is ending.

Many have genuine concern and [understandable] frustration regarding Salem and their contract with BCBS, leaving many with no other option than Silverton or Santiam for their care. BCBS is a huge health plan for blue collar and union workers, which makes up a chunk of the Canyon residents who rely on Santiam. Lack of provider access is SCARY and Salem already takes in Santiam patients who require higher levels of care.

This is the contingency plan for how we will be able to keep Santiam operating, without forcing their residents to commute further west to Salem for care. From Salem Clinic's PacificSource patients lapse, Salem's ED volume went from a daily average of 300 to 333; this will continue to rise if Santiam isn't able to operate.

Threats of closures of operations will continue to trickle. Lebanon and Lincoln City (Samaritan Health System) faced risk of closure to their birthing centers, creating larger risk for laboring mothers and complications for their lack of access.

I share these realities with years of experience in patient registration, emergency services, and hospital operations; understanding business operations, financial and accounting overview, and how these decisions are made.

I hope from an overhead Birds Eye view, this helps understand why the acquisition is necessary. Santiam deserves to remain operating and fully capable of meeting its needs of the Canyon.

Thank you for your time and consideration, Melissa

69. 7/14/26

July 14, 2026

Governor Tina Kotek

State of Oregon

Dear Governor Kotek,

I am writing to respectfully urge your support for the Oregon Health Authority's emergency review and approval of the proposed merger between Santiam Hospital and Salem Health by August 1, 2026.

My name is Dr. Tanie Hotan. I am a board-certified family physician who has practiced at Santiam Hospital for the past 25 years and the immediate past president of the Marion-Polk County Medical Society. I am also a Vietnamese American immigrant, a mother, and a physician who has spent my entire career caring for families throughout the Santiam Canyon and Mid-Willamette Valley.

For twenty-five years, I have witnessed firsthand the value of Santiam Hospital's independent, community-centered culture. The trust, relationships, and local accountability that define rural healthcare have allowed me to care for multiple generations of families in Aumsville, Stayton, Sublimity, Lyons, Mehama, and surrounding communities. Preserving that culture is critically important.

For this reason, I strongly support the merger between Santiam Hospital and Salem Health. Salem Health is the healthcare organization whose mission, values, and community focus most closely align with our own. This merger offers the best opportunity to preserve local healthcare while providing the financial stability necessary for Santiam's future.

The urgency of this decision cannot be overstated.

As of today, July 14, 2026, Santiam Hospital is only eleven months away from the expiration of our current Epic electronic health record agreement through St. Charles Health System. Epic is the foundation of modern healthcare operations and connects us with healthcare systems throughout Oregon and beyond.

Transitioning to a new Epic environment is not a simple software change. It requires extensive workflow redesign, data migration, staff training, testing, and implementation. A successful transition typically requires 12 to 18 months. Delaying

approval significantly increases the risk of operational disruption, patient safety concerns, and financial instability.

Without timely approval, Santiam faces the possibility of losing the ability to maintain critical healthcare infrastructure. The alternatives are stark: closure, severe service reductions, or acquisition by a large national healthcare corporation.

I believe those alternatives would be far more harmful to our community.

Some concerns have been raised regarding insurance access, particularly for Regence members. While those concerns are understandable, I encourage decision-makers to consider the broader picture. If Santiam is not financially viable, we will not be able to provide care to patients regardless of their insurance coverage. From a harm-reduction perspective, the Salem Health merger is the strongest option for preserving healthcare access across our region.

I would also like to offer a practical example of what health equity looks like in our rural community.

Just yesterday, July 13, I cared for a patient whom I have known for approximately twenty-five years. During her visit, she shared updates about her volunteer work with the Aumsville Food Bank. Twice each month, the food bank provides groceries to elderly residents, low-income families, and others facing food insecurity.

As a rural family physician, I know that many of my patients struggle to access healthy food. For some, a refrigerator stocked with nutritious food may have a greater impact on health than a prescription medication. Because I practice in a community-based healthcare system, I am able to build relationships that extend beyond the clinic walls. I know the nonprofit leaders, volunteers, schools, churches, and community organizations serving my patients.

Santiam Hospital and our clinics collaborate with organizations such as the Aumsville Food Bank and Marion-Polk County Youth Farm programs. Together, we help connect vulnerable families with healthy food while supporting education around nutrition and agriculture. These partnerships address the root causes of poor health in ways that medicine alone cannot.

This is the culture I am asking you to help preserve.

My patients are not simply names on a schedule. They are neighbors, my children's teachers, volunteers, and families I have known for decades. The relationships built through local healthcare allow us to identify needs, connect resources, and close health-equity gaps in real and meaningful ways.

I am concerned that if Santiam is ultimately acquired by a large national organization, many of these local connections and community-driven solutions will be weakened. Salem Health offers the best opportunity to maintain our local identity while providing the resources necessary to remain financially and operationally viable.

Governor Kotek, thank you for your leadership and your commitment to Oregon's healthcare system. I respectfully ask for your support of the emergency review process and for a timely decision by August 1, 2026. I have communicated with your advisor Kristina, and am seeking an opportunity to speak with you in person this week.

Sincerely,

Dr. Tanie Hotan, MD

Family Physician, Santiam Hospital (25 years)

Immediate Past President, Marion-Polk County Medical Society

Vietnamese American Immigrant, Mother, and Community Advocate

70. 7/14/26

Hello, I would like to begin by stating that I am in total support of these two entities merging and believe it is what is best not only for local patients of Santiam, but the entire Valley and Canyon communities. My family has a long history in the Willamette Valley and specifically the Salem/Stayton area. My niece and nephew were born at Santiam Hospital, and I know several people who work there currently. So my support for this merger is deeply personal. Salem Health and Santiam are two amazing organizations. Hospitals across the country are facing major financial hurdles and many are being forced to cut vital patient care services, leaving their communities to seek care out of town, and in some extreme cases out of state. Some organizations are being forced to close all together. Santiam Canyon residents can not afford to lose the hospital if it is forced to close. The healthcare community has to look out for each other, now more than ever. And I believe Santiam Hospital will have an amazing partner in Salem Health Hospitals and Clinics.

Kyle Knight

71. 7/14/26

I strongly support Santiam's Hospital & Clinics emergency exemption request and its affiliation with Salem Health. I believe Salem Health is the right partner to ensure Santiam remains strong and continues providing high-quality care to our community.

Jennifer Lemont

72. 7/14/26

The impact of losing our local hospital and clinics would be devastating from a patient and employee standpoint. Our community needs access to emergency and maternity services without a longer commute to Salem, Silverton or Albany and adding time in critical situations can have lasting impacts on care, placing patients at risk. Santiam Hospital is also a large employer for our community and the economic impacts would be devastating. Please consider this merger - our community MUST keep our local hospital.

Stephanie G.

73. 7/14/26

As a healthcare worker serving patients at Santiam Hospital, I strongly support preserving full local access to healthcare services in our community. Our patients depend on timely, high-quality care close to home, especially seniors, families, and those with limited transportation. Reducing local access would create unnecessary barriers, increase travel times, delay treatment, and place additional stress on patients and their loved ones.

Lily Pelayo-Rodriguez

74. 7/14/26

As both a resident of Stayton, OR and an employee of Salem Health, I am writing to express my concern for healthcare in the Canyon if this partnership does not go through. The people of the canyon will only benefit from this partnership as it will bring better and more advanced care opportunities to the area. If Santiam closes, there will be no local care for emergencies, etc. I am in full support of this partnership.

Keeping healthcare services available locally is essential to ensuring better health outcomes, supporting our rural community, and allowing healthcare providers to continue delivering compassionate, life-saving care when it is needed most. Please protect and preserve full local access for the patients and families who rely on Santiam Hospital every day.

Christine Wilkerson

75. 7/14/26

At a time when healthcare systems are already struggling across Oregon, losing an entire system in the Canyon is unacceptable, especially when there is a way to save it. I understand there are concerns regarding insurance or ideas of Salem Health becoming a 'monopoly', but those views don't see what we see every day. In my short time as a Salem Health employee, I have seen those in charge fight to improve the daily lives of both patients and employees. This last year when hospitals across the state were laying people off, all of our staff came together as a TEAM to ensure the stability of the employees and the communities we serve. It is truly inspiring to see such a positive collaboration, especially in an organization this size. Santiam Hospital and Clinics are already doing great work; please allow us to not only help them continue that work, but also to bring our synergy in order to see them and their patients thrive.

Jennifer Brookhouse

76. 7/14/26

I firmly support the merging of Santiam and Salem Health. Given today's healthcare access challenges and the cost of care, combining resources to provide services to otherwise underserved communities, is the most likely solution.

Justine Flora

77. 7/14/26

Santiam will not survive financially without a merger. Salem Health offers the best option for a merger. Is it perfect? No! But it is the best option. Please do not wait so long that Santiam goes under.

Kelley Evans-Jordan

78. 7/14/26

While I do not live in the immediate area affected by this merger, I am an Oregon resident who works in healthcare finance. From an industry perspective, Santiam Hospital is in dire need of a strategic partner to survive. Allowing a vital healthcare facility to close when a viable solution is on the table would be a profound failure on the part of our state government.

Regardless of individual opinions on this merger, we must face the reality that a hospital is on the brink of shutting its doors. This facility serves an entire community. If it closes, the nearest Emergency Room and Labor & Delivery unit for these residents would be up to 65 miles away—a distance that puts lives at severe risk during a medical emergency. I completely understand the anxiety and fear surrounding organizational changes, but we must weigh that against the far greater terror and catastrophic outcome of losing a community hospital entirely.

Oregon already imposes some of the strictest healthcare regulations in the country, and as a result, our state's healthcare infrastructure is struggling. Until state leadership shifts its focus from penalizing healthcare facilities to actively supporting them, we will continue to see local hospitals on the verge of collapse.

Partnering Santiam with an established, Oregon-based health system is the best way to keep care local. The alternative—watching it close or hoping for an out-of-state partner willing to navigate Oregon's heavy regulatory landscape—is not a realistic or safe option for our citizens.

Please do not let Santiam fail. Oregon cannot afford to lose this hospital or the essential services it provides. Ultimately, local objections to the merger will not matter if the hospital is forced to close permanently—but the actions of those fighting to save it will matter infinitely to the patients who rely on it.

Caitlin Patton

79. 7/14/26

As a lifelong Marion County resident and a Salem Health employee, I strongly support the partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital. Having worked for other healthcare systems, I can confidently say that Salem Health is a remarkable

organization. Although it is a large health system, its leadership remains accessible, responsive, and deeply connected to both employees and the communities we serve.

Salem Health's culture of continuous improvement, collaboration, and problem-solving allows us to adapt quickly to challenges while remaining focused on patient care. Most importantly, we genuinely care about the health and well-being of our community.

I believe this partnership will strengthen healthcare services throughout the Santiam Canyon by combining Salem Health's resources and expertise with Santiam Hospital's strong local presence and commitment to its community. Together, we can enhance access to high-quality care, expand services, and ensure that residents of the canyon continue to receive exceptional healthcare close to home.

Tarah Lavery

80. 7/14/26

We need to help them . IAM GOOD with having Santiam hospital to be part of Salem Health.

Petey Rettler

81. 7/14/26

We are writing to express resounding support for the emergency approval of the partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital and Clinics.

As former residents of the Santiam Canyon, my family knows firsthand the value of having access to local care. While living in the Canyon, we saw how quickly local care could respond when neighbors needed it most. Friends who had accidents with large animals on their farms received urgent care within minutes of their homes, care that simply would not have been possible without a hospital in the Canyon. We also have family members with chronic health conditions who live very near Santiam Hospital and depend on that proximity for their ongoing care.

The Santiam Canyon community relies on quality local care because, in health care, minutes can make a significant difference in outcomes. Even now, when my family spends time at Detroit Lake or travels home from skiing at Hoodoo, I take comfort in knowing there is a local hospital, along with ambulance service nearby if we need it.

Health care regulation is often complex, but this decision is straightforward. We ask that HCMO approve this emergency request so that local, life-saving care is preserved for the Santiam Canyon community.

Sincerely, Shea and Christina Corum

82. 7/14/26

I had my second child at Santiam Hospital in 2005. The services this hospital provided and continues to provide are not only essential but exceptional. The people of the Canyon need this hospital. It would be a detriment to the community if they were forced to close their doors.

Deanne Prock

83. 7/14/26

To whom it may concern,

I am writing today in support of the proposed affiliation between Salem and Santiam Hospital. I have seen firsthand the importance of maintaining access to healthcare in our rural communities. I understand the concerns regarding market competition and insurance coverage. These are legitimate concerns that deserve thought and consideration. However, these concerns dwarf in comparison to the real issue at hand: What happens if Santiam Hospital is no longer fiscally viable?

Independent rural hospitals across the country are closing their doors due to unprecedented financial pressures, leaving thousands and thousands without reliable access to healthcare. For these hospitals, Santiam among them, affiliation with a larger system is the only way to keep doors open for patients. Without the support this affiliation there is a very real possibility that our community could lose it's local hospital in the coming years.

The consequences of this are far reaching. Residents of Sublimity, Lyons, Mill City, Gates, Detroit, and other surrounding communities would be left without timely access to emergency medical care, obstetrics, surgery and countless other services we provide, including Primary Care clinics. Some of the communities to the east that we serve would be 2 hours from the nearest hospital.

Imagine your dad, aunt, sister, or partner suffering a stroke, MI, or trauma and the hospital that was once a quick drive from your rural town is now closed and the nearest emergency medical center is an hour or more away. For these very time sensitive emergencies, the loss of life could be more profound than anticipated. This is an unnecessary risk to our community.

This community has relied on this hospital for generations. Not just as patients but as a pillar of our economy. It is an essential piece of our region's safety net and our growth. No affiliation is without challenges, and the issues brought forward should be handled with care and consideration for all involved. Unfortunately, denying this affiliation does not solve those concerns. It ultimately raises larger, more serious and life altering, concerns that could last generations.

I respectfully encourage OHA to approve this affiliation so that Santiam can continue to provide all of the care and support it does for this large rural community. As we look at other areas of the nation where healthcare deserts are getting more common, I implore you to not allow Oregon to follow suit and keep our community hospitals open for some of our most vulnerable citizens.

I appreciate your time and consideration in this matter,

Stephanie Hilpert RN, BSN, CBIC

84. 7/14/26

In support of the emergency exemption to expedite the merger to ensure that Santiam hospital, an essential rural hospital, can continue to serve patients in the Canyon.

Jenna Veloz

85. 7/14/26

I do not support this merger. Salem Health will monopolize our healthcare. We have Regence Insurance and will be forced to seek medical services outside the area we live. Sure Santiam's contract with Regence runs until 2027 but then what happens if this merger is allowed. How do other small communities retain their medical services. Salem Health is trying to be a big bully. We the people will be screwed over once again. We're traveling right now, out of state, and so many nice medical facilities that put patients first. Maybe it's really time to move out of state.

Brenda Campbell

86. 7/14/26

I would not want to see healthcare for the Santiam Canyon of > 60,000 patients be taken away. Whatever needs to happen to continue healthcare for those patients would be my ultimate priority.

Thannmai Dotran

87. 7/14/26

Praying for the best decision for Santiam Hospital. I have worked at Santiam for 30 years, I appreciate the care and culture at my Hospital and believe the community feels the same. I know a lot of people that work at Salem Health and know their care and culture is of the same as Santiam. I and my family have had great care and service EVERY time we have needed Salems or Santiams services. I believe both Salem and Santiam have a lot to learn from each other, the leadership of Maggie Hudson and her predecessor Terry Fletchel have created a wonderful, caring, and safe establishment for Patients and Staff.

Nancy Larson

88. 7/14/26

The community in the Santiam Canyon should have health care available to them. A partnership with Salem Health is vital to Santiam Hospital's survival. Please allow Salem Health to save the Santiam Hospital from financial collapse and allow it to improve the health care to this lovely community.

Ellen Hampton

89. 7/14/26

Dear Health Care Market Oversight Team

I respectfully ask you to bring together Salem Health Hospitals and Clinics and Santiam Hospitals and Clinics by supporting and approving their emergency application.

Access to quality healthcare is deeply personal to me. I have been a Salem Health emergency room and intensive care patient following three life-threatening situations.

From these experiences I have firsthand knowledge of the extraordinary expertise and compassionate care offered through Salem Health. I know this quality of care will not waiver after this joining.

People with wealth sometimes choose to access healthcare outside our region. But most residents of the mid-Willamette Valley depend on finding reliable, high-quality healthcare close to home. This partnership is a serious proposal that preserves high quality, local access care, in the Canyon and the mid-Willamette Valley.

There is no good reason to deny Canyon residents the advantages that come from the merger, like improved care coordination, better access to specialists and services, benefits of regionally educated healthcare professionals, and convenient locality-based healthcare services.

Concerns about affordability and competition are understandable. However, yours has also become a choice about ensuring stability. Stable access to care is most genuinely what you will be approving.

Please do not forget that approximately two-thirds of patients in our regional service area rely on publicly funded health coverage, including Medicare, Medicaid, and the Oregon Health Plan. This proposal preserves access to safe, high-quality, financially sustainable healthcare for the entire region.

In weighing the public interest, your approval will prioritize the needs of the broadest possible population—including seniors, many working families, children, people shouldering disabilities, as well as address needs of residents who live in smaller rural communities.

I urge you to approve the emergency application and deliver a useful pathway for healthcare access and ensure a better quality of life for people in the Canyon.

Sincerely,

Jim Bauer

90. 7/14/26

I am writing in strong support of the emergency exemption request for the proposed partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital.

Santiam Hospital is more than a healthcare facility—it is a vital resource for the community. Its closure would leave a significant gap in access to care and negatively impact countless patients, families, and employees. The partnership with Salem Health represents an important opportunity to preserve local healthcare services and ensure the hospital can continue serving those who rely on it.

I respectfully urge the Oregon Health Authority to approve this partnership for the benefit of our patients, our workforce, and the community as a whole.

Denise Pierce

91. 7/14/26

I strongly support the Emergency Exemption application between Santiam Hospital & Clinics and Salem Health. This affiliation is an important step toward ensuring the long-term stability of healthcare services for residents of the Santiam Canyon and surrounding communities.

Our rural communities depend on access to high-quality, local healthcare. This partnership will help preserve and strengthen those services while improving continuity of care for patients. By aligning with Salem Health, patients will benefit from greater coordination between providers, expanded access to specialty care and resources, and a more seamless healthcare experience without having to leave their community whenever possible.

Given the significant financial and operational challenges facing Santiam Hospital & Clinics, pursuing the Emergency Exemption pathway is a practical and necessary step to allow the affiliation to move forward more quickly. The urgency of these challenges makes timely action critical. I encourage the Oregon Health Authority to approve the Emergency Exemption so this partnership can proceed and continue providing stable, accessible, and high-quality healthcare for the residents of the Santiam Canyon for years to come.

Krista Nieraeth

92. 7/14/26

I strongly support the emergency exemption for the partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital. Without this partnership, thousands of people living in the canyon and surrounding rural communities could lose access to essential healthcare

services close to home. Santiam Hospital is a vital community resource, providing emergency, inpatient, outpatient, and preventative care to residents who would otherwise face significant travel time for treatment. Like many rural hospitals across the country, Santiam Hospital has been challenged by rising operational costs and limited financial reserves. These realities have made it increasingly difficult for the hospital to remain financially viable without additional support. Salem Health has demonstrated a commitment to preserving local healthcare by partnering with Santiam Hospital so that it can continue serving the community. This collaboration is about maintaining access to care, protecting local healthcare services, and ensuring that residents of the canyon have timely, high-quality care when they need it most. I urge the OHA to approve this emergency exemption to help preserve this essential partnership and protect access to healthcare for the communities that depend on Santiam Hospital and Clinics.

Andrea Moye

93. 7/14/26

The contrast in executive leadership at Santiam Hospital over the past several years has been significant. Under the leadership of former CEO Terry Fletchall, Santiam Hospital served its community successfully for more than 30 years. In contrast, during the tenure of current CEO Maggie Hudson, COO Tiffanie Pye, and CNO Debbie Turrell and the rest of the executive leadership team, the hospital has experienced substantial financial and operational decline. Based on what I have personally observed, I believe poor financial stewardship, ineffective leadership, and a lack of organizational accountability have contributed to the hospital's current circumstances.

For these reasons, I strongly urge the Oregon Health Authority to approve the emergency application. This merger provides an opportunity for Salem Health to stabilize the organization, bring in experienced leadership, make the difficult but necessary organizational changes, and restore the hospital's long-term financial and operational health. Most importantly, it will ensure that residents of the Santiam Canyon and surrounding rural communities continue to have access to essential healthcare services.

A.M.

94. 7/14/26

I support this merger to preserve primary care and ED accessibility for people in the greater Santiam Canyon area. I know how hard it is to get a PCP and how busy the local ED and urgent cares are when I or my friends/family need care I can't imagine what that would do if those beds and clinics weren't an option for pts. I also think that rural settings do have challenges with distance and adding further for them to travel to get care could add a significant barrier for them which could lead to worsening overall health. Please help our local communities out by doing the right thing and approving this emergency condition for Salem and Santiam to partner together.

Kim Alt

95. 7/14/26

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

Santiam Hospital provides critical healthcare services for residents of the Santiam Canyon. Given the hospital's worsening financial situation and the urgent need for a new electronic health record system, timely action is necessary to preserve access to care in this rural community.

From an emergency and behavioral health perspective, maintaining local healthcare services is essential. Delays in approval could jeopardize patient access to emergency, inpatient, outpatient, and mental health services that Canyon residents depend on every day.

This partnership offers a sustainable path forward, ensuring continued access to high-quality, not-for-profit healthcare close to home. I respectfully urge the Oregon Health Authority to approve the emergency exemption request and help protect healthcare services for the communities we serve.

Mandi Dix DNP, MSN, RN, CPEN, NE-BC

96. 7/14/26

The Salem metropolitan area and communities east to Detroit, Oregon, represent a population of more than 200,000 people. If Salem Health is allowed to acquire Santiam Hospital, many of these residents would effectively be left without meaningful healthcare options. For many Oregonians, especially those living in rural communities

such as the Santiam Canyon, traveling to hospitals farther north or south is simply not practical. Residents west of the Willamette River are also largely served by Salem Health. As a result, people in Salem and the surrounding communities would have only two realistic choices:

1. Enroll in Kaiser Permanente insurance and remain within its healthcare system (which is not a viable option for many people because insurance choices are often determined by their employer).
2. Receive care through Salem Health regardless of which commercial insurance plan they have.

This merger would not only eliminate meaningful patient choice for the majority of residents who cannot reasonably travel outside the region, but it would also eliminate competition. Without a competing hospital system, Salem Health would have significantly greater market power to influence healthcare prices and negotiations with insurers. Whatever insurance may not cover of the new set rate the patient would be left with to pay.

The community has already experienced the effects of this type of market power. When Salem Health stopped accepting Blue Cross insurance, many Salem-area residents lost access to their established providers and were forced to seek care elsewhere if they were able. Many of those patients turned to Santiam Hospital and its clinics to establish care with new primary care providers.

Overall, the primary beneficiary of this merger would be Salem Health through increased market share and revenue. The public, however, would bear the cost through reduced healthcare choice, diminished competition, greater vulnerability during insurance contract disputes, and a healthcare system with fewer alternatives for patients throughout the Mid-Willamette Valley.

As a final observation, for the past one to two years Santiam Hospital's CEO consistently reported to staff that the organization was performing well financially and praised employees for the hospital's success. Now that this acquisition has been delayed, we are suddenly being told the hospital is on the verge of bankruptcy. That dramatic change raises important questions about the hospital's financial position and the urgency being presented to justify this merger.

Jake Smith

97. 7/14/26

I am hopeful that this partnership is approved so that Santiam Hospital can continue to serve our community. With this partnership Santiam can continue to provide quality care to the Santiam Canyon and its surrounding areas. So many depend greatly on Santiam Hospital and partnering with them will not only allow them to continue to serve them but also to hopefully bring more services to the Santiam area, which would further help the community allowing them to receive more services closer to home. Not approving this partnership will create a hardship for so many patients which will not only affect their health but also their financial situations. Thank you for your consideration.

Amanda Toney

98. 7/14/26

Our rural communities need quality healthcare. Many of my friends and co-workers live in the wider Santiam community. Providing access to quality healthcare impacts the people I care about and work with. As well as it impacts the people they care about; their families, neighbors, friends, and yet to be discovered friends. When a rural hospital or clinic is suffering, it is in the best interest of the broader healthcare community to come to their aid. I support the partnership between Salem Health and Santiam. I am encouraged by this partnership for at the heart of it, the focus is on the patients and their care. This is what healthcare is all about, looking after each other and improving the health and wellbeing of our communities.

Catherine Kotzian

99. 7/14/26

My father was a survivor of an aortic dissection in 2011, in no small part due to the stabilization and coordination efforts of the tiny Phelps Emergency Room of Garberville that was located 5 miles away from my dad's home in the remote town of Redway, CA. The only other emergency room being 75 miles away in Fortuna, CA, from which the closest ambulances were dispatched. He drove himself to Garberville while suffering that chest pain. It was a miracle he made it to Phelps. Without their strategic location and staff with emergency medicine knowledge, he would never have made it 225 miles

to his life-saving, emergency aortic repair surgery at John Muir Medical Center in Walnut Creek, Ca. There are many parallels between the region my dad was living in, the Humboldt Redwoods State Park of the Redwood Forest, and the Santiam Canyon, which is home to the Santiam State Forest. Both of these regions are also home to dangerous and physically demanding occupations in the lumber industry. The populations of the incorporated towns are almost the same: Garberville, CA at 1,400 to 1,700; Mill City, OR at 2,160; Redway, CA at 1,150 to 1,250; Lyons, OR 1,225; Meyers Flat, CA at 150 to 200 and Legett, CA 25 to 90; Detroit, OR at 185 and Idanha, OR at 160. Both regions are also main destinations for tourism and outdoor recreation, Santiam Canyon at approximately 500,000 visits per year and Humboldt State Park forest at about 600,000 plus per year. Up to 1/3 of the economy in the Santiam Canyon is related to tourism. It's critical for Oregon to protect tourists and residents of the Santiam Canyon by facilitating accessible Emergency Room care and approving any help needed. Approving the Salem Health and Santiam Hospital system merger would be an ideal way to efficiently provide this access and would streamline coordination of care by allowing a level 2 trauma partner participate in navigating this care coordination. Please approve the merger.

Andrea Flores

100. 7/14/26

I'm writing in favor of the Salem Health/Santiam Hospital and Clinics partnership. I've worked for Salem Health for the past 15 years and have been impressed by the way they care for patients and employees, run the business, and work in the community.

I don't have any concerns about this moving forward, and from what I know about Santiam's financial situation, there are a lot of patients in the area at risk of losing local care. I'd prefer for this not to happen.

Lance Hoffman

101. 7/14/26

Timely action should be taken so that Santiam Hospital can continue to be open. There is a large rural community that heavily depends on the Santiam Hospital and it shouldn't be taken lightly. It could lead to serious consequences, as this is a health organization, I believe that the health of the community should be prioritized.

At the same time, I encourage the Oregon Health Authority to carefully evaluate the Emergency Exemption request to ensure that any expedited approval truly serves the health of the public. If an emergency exemption is granted, I ask that OHA require strong commitments to preserve access to care, maintain key services, protect healthcare workers, and continue serving all members of the community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Nancy Myers

102. 7/14/26

I am both an employee of Santiam Hospital and a patient who has trusted this hospital with my family's care for more than 10 years. I ask that you carefully consider the future of our community as you evaluate the proposed merger between Santiam Hospital and Salem Health.

Many people see the word "merger" and immediately assume it is a negative thing. But the reality is that healthcare today is incredibly challenging. The cost of providing care continues to rise, while insurance companies often reimburse hospitals far less than what was negotiated in their contracts. Rural hospitals across Oregon are struggling to survive under these financial pressures. This is not unique to Santiam—it's happening everywhere. If this merger does not move forward, the alternative may not be independence. The reality is that Santiam could be forced to sell to a much larger, for-profit healthcare corporation with little connection to our community. A large corporation may make decisions based on profits instead of people. Local voices could be lost, services could be reduced, and the personal, community-focused care that Santiam is known for could disappear. By partnering with Salem Health, another nonprofit organization, we have the opportunity to join forces with an organization that understands the importance of serving our local communities. Together, we can strengthen healthcare services, improve access to specialists and resources, invest in our workforce, and continue providing compassionate care while keeping the focus on patients—not shareholders.

As an employee, I also worry deeply about what happens if a larger corporation acquires Santiam. Many of us have dedicated years—some decades—of our lives to this hospital. If another corporation purchases us, employees could lose their years of service, accrued benefits, and paid time off. Many would be required to start over as

brand-new employees despite years of dedication. That uncertainty affects morale, retention, and ultimately the care we provide to our patients.

The truth is that healthcare workers are exhausted. We are overworked and underpaid. Many days we are expected to do the work of two or three people because positions cannot be filled or afforded. We do it because we genuinely care about our patients. But when staff are stretched beyond their limits, it becomes increasingly difficult to give every patient the time and attention they deserve. We don't want to simply get patients through the day—we want to provide the compassionate, quality care they deserve.

Despite these challenges, I continue to come to work because I love what I do. I love my patients. I love my coworkers. I love this community.

Santiam Hospital is unlike anywhere else I have worked. We are more than coworkers—we are a family. When one department is struggling, another steps in to help. We support one another through difficult days, celebrate victories together, and rally around our patients when they need us most. That culture cannot be measured on a balance sheet, but it makes all the difference in the care our community receives.

This merger is about preserving local healthcare before it is too late. It is about ensuring that our community continues to have access to quality care close to home. It is about protecting the people who have dedicated their careers to serving this community. And it is about choosing a future where decisions are made by organizations that share our nonprofit mission of caring for patients rather than maximizing profits.

I respectfully ask you to approve this merger and allow Santiam Hospital and Salem Health to move forward together. By working together, we can build a stronger, more sustainable future for our patients, our employees, and the communities we proudly serve.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jessica Gower

103. 7/14/26

Santiam and Salem Hospital partnership is a natural and important partnership to continue to provide necessary medical care in these local communities. Given the

current healthcare climate in Oregon and the country, it is not surprising that a small, stand-alone hospital would need to partner with a larger system to be able to remain open. This partnership makes sense on many levels but especially because the hospitals are located in relatively close proximity. This is similar to the partnership between Salem Hospital and West Valley Hospital in Dallas, Oregon which has significantly improved access to care and the quality of medical care in the surrounding communities. Close proximity of Santiam and Salem Hospitals improves the ease of coordinating care and resources between both facilities. If this partnership is not approved and Santiam Hospital were to close, it would have devastating consequences to the local community. Residents would be forced to travel outside of their local area for basic and specialty medical care which then has potential to overwhelm existing resources in surrounding communities. Medical providers would likely leave the area to find work elsewhere which would then further stress the local medical system. This partnership makes sense and is important for the future health of residents in the Santiam Canyon. I ask you to approve this partnership.

Natalie Reed

104. 7/14/26

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. Considering the new public comment period, I wanted to reshare my personal thoughts.

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, I believe 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

105. 7/14/26

Santiam Hospital is a VERY important part of the community in the Santiam Canyon. We would be lost without it. While ideally they would remain independent, it seems that at this point in the health care system that is not an option. PLEASE approve this merger to keep our Santiam Hospital serving the community.

Judy Skinner

106. 7/14/26

Working in cancer care, I have personally witnessed the impact that gaps in care or delays in care can have on patient outcome. I urge The Oregon Health Authority to

approve the Emergency Exemption Application between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital. It is vital that the care for the community in the canyon can occur without any delays. Each year it has become harder and harder to find adequate providers for patients in communities with lower resources and having the cooperation between Salem Health and Santiam Health would help improve the accessibility and care for the community.

Thank you,

Katie Bearden, RN, BSN

107. 7/14/26

Arthur Apodaca [submitted a public comment.](#)

108. 7/14/26

Public Comment in Support of the Santiam Hospital and Salem Health Merger

My name is Jessica Gower, and I am both an employee of Santiam Hospital and a patient who has trusted this hospital with my family's care for more than 10 years. I am also a single mother who understands firsthand how important it is to have quality healthcare close to home.

I ask that you carefully consider the future of our community as you evaluate the proposed merger between Santiam Hospital and Salem Health.

Many people see the word "merger" and immediately assume it is a negative thing. But the reality is that healthcare today is incredibly challenging. The cost of providing care continues to rise, while insurance companies often reimburse hospitals far less than what was negotiated in their contracts. Rural hospitals across Oregon are struggling to survive under these financial pressures. This is not unique to Santiam—it's happening everywhere.

If this merger does not move forward, the alternative may not be independence. The reality is that Santiam could be forced to sell to a much larger, for-profit healthcare corporation with little connection to our community. A large corporation may make decisions based on profits instead of people. Local voices could be lost, services could be reduced, and the personal, community-focused care that Santiam is known for could disappear.

By partnering with Salem Health, another nonprofit organization, we have the opportunity to join forces with an organization that understands the importance of serving our local communities. Together, we can strengthen healthcare services, improve access to specialists and resources, invest in our workforce, and continue providing compassionate care while keeping the focus on patients—not shareholders.

As an employee, I also worry deeply about what happens if a larger corporation acquires Santiam. Many of us have dedicated years—some decades—of our lives to this hospital. If another corporation purchases us, employees could lose their years of service, accrued benefits, and paid time off. Many would be required to start over as brand-new employees despite years of dedication. That uncertainty affects morale, retention, and ultimately the care we provide to our patients.

The truth is that healthcare workers are exhausted. We are overworked and underpaid. Many days we are expected to do the work of two or three people because positions cannot be filled or afforded. We do it because we genuinely care about our patients. But when staff are stretched beyond their limits, it becomes increasingly difficult to give every patient the time and attention they deserve. We don't want to simply get patients through the day—we want to provide the compassionate, quality care they deserve.

Despite these challenges, I continue to come to work because I love what I do. I love my patients. I love my coworkers. I love this community.

Santiam Hospital is unlike anywhere else I have worked. We are more than coworkers—we are a family. When one department is struggling, another steps in to help. We support one another through difficult days, celebrate victories together, and rally around our patients when they need us most. That culture cannot be measured on a balance sheet, but it makes all the difference in the care our community receives.

This merger is about preserving local healthcare before it is too late. It is about ensuring that our community continues to have access to quality care close to home. It is about protecting the people who have dedicated their careers to serving this community. And it is about choosing a future where decisions are made by organizations that share our nonprofit mission of caring for patients rather than maximizing profits.

I respectfully ask you to approve this merger and allow Santiam Hospital and Salem Health to move forward together. By working together, we can build a stronger, more sustainable future for our patients, our employees, and the communities we proudly serve.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jessica Gower, CCMA, CHW

Care Coordinator-Clinic

Santiam Hospital & Clinics

109. 7/15/26

I am writing in support of the emergency exemption application for the proposed partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital & Clinics.

As a healthcare professional and a member of the local community, I understand how important it is for patients to have reliable access to high-quality care close to home. Santiam Hospital & Clinics provides essential services to communities that depend on local access to emergency, inpatient, outpatient, and primary care.

A partnership with Salem Health would help protect continuity of care, support the healthcare workforce, and provide greater stability for patients and families throughout the region. Delays in reaching a decision could create additional uncertainty for employees, providers, patients, and the communities Santiam serves.

I support the emergency exemption because the financial stability of Santiam and the continued availability of patient care are urgent concerns. I respectfully encourage the Oregon Health Authority to approve the emergency exemption and allow the proposed partnership to move forward promptly.

Thank you for considering my comments and for recognizing the importance of maintaining accessible, dependable healthcare services in our local communities.

Jennifer Rogers

110. 7/15/26

If the Santiam Hospital closes, this will devastate our community. We need these resources. They have clinics in all of the rural towns and are even opening a much-

needed pharmacy in Mill City. The closest medical care will be in Salem or Albany if the hospital closes. This is not an option for so many people. This will also saturate those facilities, and we will all have to establish new care and wait months to be seen. This benefits no one. This will also affect our emergency calls. What will happen with the ambulance services? Will they come from Salem when there is a terrible accident in Detroit? Please consider helping our hospital survive. Thank you

Elizabeth Allman

111. 7/15/26

My name is Katie Dobler, Vice President of Salem Health Medical Group. This comment reflects my personal views as a community member, a Salem native and a health care professional with more than 20 years of experience in medical group leadership.

The Oregon Health Authority should approve this emergency exemption by Aug. 1, 2026.

The emergency designation is warranted. The application documents three compounding crises that cannot be solved independently. Santiam's days cash on hand will fall below 30 days by September 2026 — the threshold at which a hospital can no longer reliably make payroll. The Epic EHR contract terminates June 30, 2027, and the transition must begin by September 2026 at a cost of approximately \$11.8 million Santiam does not have. A hospital and its clinics cannot operate without a functioning EHR. Existing HUD loan covenants create a further risk that, if breached, could result in the federal government assuming operational control. These three crises reinforce each other. There is no independent path out of all three simultaneously.

The community stakes are not abstract. Santiam serves approximately 60,000 patients annually across a geographically isolated stretch of Marion and Linn counties — including 23,690 emergency room visits and more than 180,000 outpatient and clinic visits. Its ambulance service covers 160 square miles of primary 9-1-1 response territory with no identified replacement. Seventeen percent of Mill City residents live in poverty. The 2020 wildfires destroyed 80% of Detroit's homes. These are not communities with alternatives. Without this partnership, Santiam has stated it would need to eliminate maternity and intensive care services, cut wages 15% and conduct

involuntary layoffs — measures that would likely accelerate the very decline they are trying to slow.

Fifteen years leading an independent medical group taught me what it looks like when a health care organization reaches a point where operational improvements alone cannot close the gap. Reimbursement does not keep pace with costs, margins stay flat or negative for years, and one downturn tips the balance. That is exactly what the application documents at Santiam — nearly a decade of break-even margins with no cushion, followed by a relatively modest revenue shortfall that became a crisis because there was nothing left to absorb it.

This partnership keeps decision-making local, keeps both organizations nonprofit and keeps Santiam's board rooted in the canyon community it has served for more than 70 years. The alternative is not the status quo — it is a managed decline that ends with a hospital closure or, worse, federal intervention stripping local leadership of operational control.

OHA has the mechanism and the moment. Please use both.

112. 7/15/26

I am writing in support of the emergency exemption request filed by Salem Health Hospitals & Clinics and Santiam Hospital & Clinics. I ask the Oregon Health Authority to act quickly to validate that this transaction meets the two criteria in statute and rule that exist to protect access to care.

I am not only a patient at Salem Health, I have the privilege of working for this incredible organization. As a patient, I have consistently received high-quality, compassionate, team-based care.

I am alarmed at the potential loss of access to care in the Santiam Canyon. Santiam Hospital & Clinics is not just a health system, it is the sole provider of acute and emergency care in the Canyon, and it also operates its primary ambulance service. If Santiam's hospital and clinics cannot continue operating, Canyon residents would face drive times of an hour or more to reach the nearest emergency or maternity care.

Santiam has been candid about the seriousness and trajectory of their financial position. This is precisely the type of situation the Legislature anticipated when it included an emergency exemption into Oregon's Health Care Market Oversight law.

As the Oregon Health Authority seeks to validate that this situation meets statutory criteria, I urge staff and leadership to move as quickly as the law allows, considering this partnership against the alternative: loss of access to care in the Santiam Canyon.

Ruth Miles

113. 7/15/26

I am writing to express my continued 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 fortunate 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 all call home.

I know from my experience as a small business owner that revenue cycles fluctuate unpredictably, and organizations of different scale have resources to weather fluctuations differently. Santiam Hospital has done an outstanding job of serving its patients and communities with very tightly scoped resources for many years. Due to economic factors outside of its control Santiam is now in a situation where the need to affiliate with a partner is much more urgent.

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 remain committed to this partnership and ask for your favorable consideration.

Christine Clarke

114. 7/15/26

Having lived in Stayton the majority of my life, I know the importance of having a hospital in our local community. I have years of fond memories of hospital fun runs and playing on sports teams sponsored by the hospital. The ER has been there for my family during stressful times, providing excellent care, reassurance, and support. Having access to those services, along with local clinics, is such a necessity for our rural community. That is why I'm a strong supporter of the partnership with Salem Health. Salem Health has also played a role in my family's story and is the reason my daughter and I are here today. During a difficult birth, their team monitored me and my daughter closely and provided on site resuscitation seconds after delivering my daughter by emergency c-section.

Both organizations mean so much to me and I am thrilled by the prospect of them partnering. While there may be challenges and growing pains along the way, I think the partnership is vital to both communities. I believe both organizations stand to learn so much from each other and will only be stronger for it.

Sarah Gonzalez

115. 7/15/26

Dear HCMO,

I think it important to start by introducing myself, so you have an understanding of my background and perspective.

I am a Family Medicine Physician at Santiam Hospital and Clinics. I provide primary care at one of their satellite clinics, and I am the director of newborn and pediatric services in the hospital. I was chief resident at the top-rated family medicine residency located at Ventura County Medical Center prior to working here. I am from rural Utah and I am passionate about access to care.

I have not commented on our potential affiliation with Salem Health thus far, but it has now become clear to me that I must use my voice to advocate for the ongoing health care of my patients, for access to care in my community and those that live in our shared general catchment area.

In an ideal world, Santiam would remain an independent community hospital; we would continue to expand to meet the needs of our growing community as well as collaborate with our colleagues in larger surrounding health systems.

Unfortunately, this is not feasible in the health care world we live in today. We must affiliate with a larger system in order to remain viable and to continue to meet our mission to serve our community in a meaningful way.

I hear there is concern about monopoly and overall access to care, but I feel assured that Salem Health has the same goal as us: serve our community. They are the most logical partner, as any other health system, or worse – private equity, would have no personal interest in our community or otherwise have a finger on the pulse, so to speak. The consequences of affiliating with another health delivery system could have a significant, negative impact the care we are able to provide.

Regence Blue Cross Blue Shield has made their position abundantly clear. To be frank, their opinion shouldn't matter. They, and other insurance companies, made the continued operations of independent and community hospitals literally impossible. It is because of their abysmal reimbursements and self-serving operations that we are in this position in the first place, and I feel strongly that they should not have a say in our path forward.

I ask you to please consider our emergency exemption request and affiliation plan care and forward-thinking. Salem is the healthiest choice for our providers and patients and the ongoing operations of our community hospital and clinics.

Dr. Sara Dunham

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Krista Call, and I am the Director of Emergency Nursing Services at Santiam Hospital. I have had the privilege of serving this organization for the past 18 years. I am submitting this letter in support of the proposed partnership between Santiam Hospital and Salem Health.

Throughout my career, I have been proud to work for an organization that consistently puts our patients and our community first. Santiam Hospital has built a culture centered on compassionate, high-quality care delivered by people who know and care deeply about the communities we serve. That commitment has never wavered, and it is one of the reasons I have dedicated nearly two decades of my professional life to this organization.

Like many in our community, I value Santiam Hospital's independence. However, I also recognize the realities facing rural and community hospitals today. Healthcare has become increasingly complex, financially challenging, and resource-intensive. While I would prefer that Santiam could remain independent indefinitely, I also believe it is important to make thoughtful decisions that ensure our hospital remains strong and available for future generations. Given the current healthcare environment, this partnership represents the most viable path toward maintaining local access to high-quality healthcare.

From my perspective as both a frontline leader and a long-time employee, Salem Health has demonstrated a genuine commitment to investing in our hospital and the communities we serve. The resources, clinical support, and long-term investment they bring are things that would be difficult for Santiam Hospital to sustain independently. This partnership strengthens our ability to continue providing excellent care locally while positioning us to meet the growing healthcare needs of our region.

Importantly, I do not believe this affiliation changes who we are. Our culture is not defined by ownership or organizational structure. It is defined by our people, our values, and the way we care for every patient who walks through our doors. The compassion, accountability, and dedication that characterize Santiam Hospital are created and sustained within our walls by the physicians, nurses, caregivers, and staff who serve this community every day. That identity remains intact.

This partnership also aligns closely with the principles that guide Santiam Hospital's Compass: Vitality, Community, Quality, and Experience. It promotes long-term organizational vitality by strengthening our financial and operational sustainability. It reinforces our commitment to community by preserving local access to care close to home. It enhances quality through expanded clinical collaboration, resources, and expertise. Finally, it improves the experience for patients, families, and caregivers by helping ensure that exceptional care remains available in our community for years to come.

As the Director of Emergency Nursing Services, I understand how essential it is for our community to have reliable emergency care available 24 hours a day. Every day I witness the trust our patients place in Santiam Hospital during some of the most vulnerable moments of their lives. Supporting this partnership is, for me, ultimately about preserving that trust by ensuring our hospital remains strong, resilient, and capable of continuing its mission well into the future.

I respectfully ask the Oregon Health Authority to consider the perspectives of those of us who have devoted our careers to serving this community. I believe this partnership will help preserve local healthcare while honoring the values and culture that have made Santiam Hospital a trusted resource for generations.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Krista Call, RN

Director of Emergency Nursing Services

Santiam Hospital and Clinics

117. 7/15/26

I strongly support the proposed partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital & Clinics under the emergency exemption process.

As an employee of Salem Health, I have seen firsthand our organization's commitment to providing high-quality, compassionate, not-for-profit care to the communities we serve. Our mission has always extended beyond our own facilities, with a focus on

ensuring patients have access to safe, timely, and sustainable healthcare throughout our region.

The financial challenges facing Santiam Hospital place essential healthcare services for the Santiam Canyon at significant risk. This partnership offers a responsible and necessary path to preserve local access to care, maintain critical healthcare services, and provide the long-term operational stability needed for the community. Without timely action, patients could experience reduced access to care and disruption of vital medical services.

Approving this emergency exemption will help protect healthcare access for thousands of Oregon residents while allowing Salem Health to continue fulfilling its mission of improving the health and well-being of the people and communities we serve. This partnership is not simply an organizational transaction—it is an investment in the long-term health, stability, and future of the Santiam Canyon and the greater mid-Willamette Valley.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Oregon Health Authority to approve the emergency exemption.

Eser Gokeri

118. 7/15/26

I keep hearing from my patients that they are concerned about their health ins Blue Cross will not be accepted here at Santiam since Salem health does not accept it. It is a concern of the staff here too for those patients. Where will they go for care?

I also here from patients that they love Santiam and prefer to come to Santiam then Salem. They do not like the 8hr + waits in ED and poor care there. I cannot speak of any personal experience at Salem Health-I have only heard it from my concerned patients.

Tina

119. 7/15/26

As a healthcare leader serving patients and families in the Polk County region, I have seen firsthand the importance of maintaining access to healthcare services in rural communities. Geographic barriers, workforce challenges, and limited local resources

can make access to emergency, inpatient, diagnostic, and specialty care difficult. In my experience, strong organizational partnerships and access to shared resources are important factors in supporting the long-term sustainability of rural and critical access healthcare services. As healthcare continues to evolve, these considerations remain central to ensuring communities can access care close to home. - Tiffany Palamaris MSN, RN, NE-BC | West Valley Hospital Nurse Administrator & Nurse Manager

120. 7/15/26

It is imperative that Santiam Hospital and clinics is open and available to provide medical services to the canyon communities. My family has been provided wonderful medical care and without the proximity of the hospital who preformed an emergency surgery on my husband I am not sure he would have survived if he had to travel to Salem. Please uphold the emergency request to be exempt from the extensive review process.

Lisa Carignan

121. 7/15/26

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, including the emergency exemption request filed to help protect continued access to care for our community. 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. The emergency filing underscores the urgency of this moment and the need for timely action to preserve local healthcare access, protect essential services, and provide stability for patients, staff, and the broader community.

From the perspective of the Santiam Hospital Auxiliary, the proposed partnership and related emergency exemption request represent a thoughtful and necessary path forward to sustain essential services, expanding access to care, and supporting the caregivers and programs our community relies upon. This approach 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 urges the Oregon Health Authority to give full and timely consideration to the emergency exemption request. We believe this action is important to strengthening healthcare access, stability, and community benefit for the region.

Sincerely,

Genny Baldwin

President

Santiam Hospital Auxiliary

122. 7/15/26

My name is Carla Reilly. I serve as the Controller at Salem Health, where I have worked for three and a half years. I strongly support the proposed affiliation between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital.

I believe this partnership is an important step toward ensuring that Santiam Hospital remains open and continues providing essential healthcare services to its community. By combining the strengths of both organizations, this affiliation creates an opportunity to build a stronger, more sustainable healthcare system that benefits patients throughout the region.

Having worked at Salem Health for the past three and a half years, I have been continually impressed by the organization's commitment to improving patient care. Salem Health is always looking for ways to expand services, improve access, and deliver high-quality care while thoughtfully addressing the challenges facing healthcare today. Time and again, I have seen the organization overcome obstacles through collaboration, innovation, and a steadfast focus on serving the community.

I believe this affiliation reflects those same values. It is an opportunity for both Salem Health and Santiam Hospital to strengthen one another while preserving local access to care and ensuring patients continue to receive the services they need close to home.

I am confident this partnership will benefit both organizations and, most importantly, the communities they serve for years to come.

Carla Reilly

123. 7/15/26

I am writing in support of the Oregon Health Authority's approval of the requested emergency exemption filing.

While I have not personally worked at Santiam Hospital, I have spent more than 13 years working in healthcare, including experience at several smaller community hospitals. Through that experience, I have seen firsthand the essential role these facilities play in the communities they serve. Their importance extends beyond providing medical care—they are often among the area's largest employers and serve as a cornerstone of the local economy and community infrastructure. I believe Santiam Hospital provides that same critical role for residents of the Santiam Canyon.

In my current healthcare operations role, I work closely with teams responsible for managing resources that are essential to providing patient care. This experience has provided me with a firsthand understanding of the operational and financial challenges healthcare organizations face every day. Healthcare organizations continuously work to identify efficiencies, responsibly manage resources, and ensure necessary services remain available to patients.

At the same time, hospitals are facing many of the same economic pressures experienced by individuals and families. Just as households have seen increases in rent, groceries, fuel, and other necessities, healthcare organizations have experienced substantial increases in the cost of supplies, equipment, technology, employee wages, and benefits. While healthcare organizations work diligently to negotiate contracts, identify efficiencies, and manage expenses responsibly, they are also dependent on external vendors and market conditions. In many cases, there are limited alternatives, requiring difficult decisions between absorbing increased costs or evaluating whether certain services can continue to be provided.

The financial challenges facing healthcare organizations are particularly significant for smaller community hospitals. Maintaining financial stability is not simply about generating positive revenue—it is what allows hospitals to reinvest in their communities by replacing aging equipment, expanding services, maintaining facilities, increasing capacity, and preparing for future healthcare needs.

The reported risk of insolvency presents an urgent concern. If Santiam Hospital is unable to secure the financial stability necessary to continue operations, the consequences would extend beyond the hospital itself. Residents of the Santiam Canyon could experience reduced access to local healthcare services, longer travel times for care, and the loss of stable local employment opportunities. These impacts would affect not only patients, but the broader community.

No healthcare organization is perfect, and every hospital has individuals who may have had different experiences or perspectives. However, communities must consider the options available to preserve access to care. Those options include partnering with a strong regional health system committed to serving the local community, pursuing

affiliation with a larger national organization that may have different priorities, or facing the possibility of closure.

A partnership with Salem Health provides an opportunity to preserve local access to healthcare while connecting Santiam Hospital with the resources, expertise, and stability needed to continue serving the residents who depend on it.

For these reasons, I respectfully encourage the Oregon Health Authority to approve the emergency exemption filing and allow this partnership to move forward in the interest of protecting healthcare access, local jobs, and the long-term sustainability of services for the Santiam Canyon community.

Shelby Bailey

124. 7/15/26

I support the merger between Santiam Hospital and Salem Health. It will help preserve access to essential healthcare services for the 50,000 residents who depend on Santiam and its clinics. The merger offers a path forward for Santiam and helps ensure the residence of the Santiam canyon continue to receive care close to home. Santiam is also one of the largest employers in the canyon, with approximately 750 employees. the merger would protect these jobs. Finally, while regulatory review is important, the financial situation described by Santiam Hospital warrants consideration of an expedited process in order to preserve access to local healthcare which should be the highest priority for the community.

Pam White

125. 7/15/26

As a Service Integration Team member and long-time supporter of Santiam Hospital & Clinics, I appreciate the opportunity to provide comment regarding the emergency exemption request currently under review.

Throughout this process, I have been encouraged by the direct engagement and transparency demonstrated by both Maggie Hudson, President & CEO of Santiam Hospital & Clinics, and Cheryl Nester Wolfe, President & CEO of Salem Health. Their willingness to attend Service Integration Team meetings, answer questions, and listen

to community concerns has reinforced my confidence that the needs of our region are being taken seriously.

What stands out to me most is the commitment both organizations have expressed to maintaining local healthcare services and continuing support for Service Integration Teams. These teams play a critical role in connecting people to resources, addressing social determinants of health, and strengthening collaboration across our communities. Knowing that this work is valued and supported is important to those of us who see its impact every day.

The emergency exemption request reflects the urgency of Santiam's current financial challenges and the need for timely action to protect healthcare access for the communities served by Santiam Hospital & Clinics. I believe this affiliation offers an opportunity to strengthen healthcare services, preserve access to care close to home, and support the long-term health and well-being of residents throughout the Santiam Canyon and Mid-Willamette Valley.

I respectfully encourage approval of the emergency exemption request so this important work can move forward without delay.

- Colleen Bradford

126. 7/15/26

If this is not approved the ramifications will be dire for both Salem Health who will need to absorb more patients in an already full system, and Canyon residents will have to travel much further and wait longer for care. It is to the benefit of our entire shared community that this go through.

Shauna Love

127. 7/15/26

I have spend years in the Stayton community, have worked for a medical provider and have many close friends in the community from the church we mutually attended that depend on the Santiam Hospital. I had my first child at the hospital and hope this partnership will help the Santiam hospital thrive along with the dependent communities up the Canyon.

Deanna Pfeil

I grew up in the Stayton area, with Santiam serving as my family's hospital. I live in Stayton. My wife and I have raised our, now young adult, children here. My church is in Stayton. I work in Stayton as well, since I work from home most of the time. If I call 911 and need an ambulance, it is Santiam Hospital that has responded in the past and will hopefully be able to respond in the future.

Santiam Hospital is very much a part of, and absolutely critical to, the Stayton community and the greater Santiam Canyon area. I am also an employee of Salem Health, and I believe in Salem Health and the essential role it plays in this region. I have close friends and family who work for Santiam, and so I understand how important that organization is to their livelihood.

In other words, I am deeply invested in the outcome of this decision and the effect it will have on the community that my family and I love and call home.

I also understand how dire Santiam's current financial situation is and believe that they will not survive without a partnership. Santiam cannot continue without a partner, and Salem Health is the best possible option.

The overlap between the communities served by Salem Health and Santiam is significant; in many ways, they are the same community. Like Santiam, Salem Health is a local healthcare organization with local governance, and it is important to keep that control local.

Salem Health has fought hard to preserve healthcare options in our communities. Many people have been led to believe that Salem Health has aggressively pursued a monopoly on local healthcare, but that is simply not true. Salem Health is invested in the community and has extended itself to preserve local medical practices and keep healthcare options available close to home. For example, it would have been unacceptable for the Salem area to lose private orthopedic or urology practices that may have closed had they not approached Salem Health about becoming part of the organization. I know how much this matters because members of my immediate family have received crucial care from both of those local clinics.

It is unfortunate that Salem Health and Blue Cross Blue Shield were previously unable to reach an agreement. I have many close friends and family members who were

negatively affected by that situation. However, the alternative was also untenable. Simply because BCBS is a large insurer does not mean that community healthcare organizations are obligated to accept unsustainable terms. I am proud of Salem Health for having the courage to stand up to BCBS, even as I hope that a future agreement can be reached, and Salem Health might once again accept BCBS coverage.

I understand that Santiam currently has a contract with BCBS. However, even if Salem Health were not to become involved, it is always possible that this contract may not be renewed in the future. The recent difficulties between Legacy Health and BCBS, which were resolved only through a retroactive agreement earlier this year, demonstrate this.

For all of these reasons, I strongly hope that the partnership between Salem Health and Santiam is allowed and encouraged to move forward.

Thank you,

Wade Davis

129. 7/15/26

Mayor Brian Quigley [submitted a public comment](#).

130. 7/15/26

I am a resident of Sublimity and I have had Regence Blue Cross since retiring in 2019. I am strongly opposed to this merger as it would force me to seek another insurance provider. It's not my problem that Salem Health rejected Regence when Santiam accepted it. I don't like what I am hearing about this process not following the normal vetting process. Tired of things getting done behind closed doors and the public getting to pay for it. A Strong NO on this merger! A strong NO on subverting the normal vetting process!

Martin Oliverson

131. 7/15/26

I am a patient with Santiam Clinic in Stayton.

My concern is that the service provided by this institution is invaluable to the community.

They run an excellent facility with real concern for the patients and the communities they service.

We need to expedite every possible available avenue to ensure the survival of this community resource.

Sincerely,

Gary Kimball

132. 7/15/26

To the Oregon Health Authority Health Care Oversight Committee,

I am writing to oppose the proposed merger between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital & Clinics.

I am a concerned citizen who grew up in Marion County, has spent the last decade working in EMS in and around Marion County, including transports to and from Salem Hospital, and am nearly finished with my bachelor's degree in public health.

1. Salem Health's track record with West Valley Hospital is a warning sign: Salem Health acquired West Valley Hospital in Dallas in 2002. Today, West Valley does not admit patients for newborn deliveries. I know this firsthand: I have personally transported patients in active labor, and immediately after delivery, from West Valley to Salem Hospital. I fear Santiam could see similar service erosion once absorbed into Salem Health.

2. The Regence BlueCross BlueShield coverage gap is already happening.: Salem Health terminated its Regence contract in 2025 and remains out-of-network. Santiam is in-network with Regence until at least June 2027. Thousands of Marion and Polk County residents rely on Regence, and there's no guarantee that coverage survives this merger.

3. Salem Health already dominates this market: The state's own review found Salem Health holds roughly 89% market share in the Salem area, alongside well-documented, exorbitant ER wait times. This merger removes one of the last independent alternatives rather than adding capacity or competition.

4. Patients would be left with few real alternatives: Legacy Silverton is the only other Marion County hospital in-network with Regence. If Santiam loses that status, Regence patients would need to travel to Silverton, Albany, or Tualatin for in-network hospital care, an unreasonable burden for rural residents.

5. The timing of Santiam's insolvency deserves scrutiny: As a former Santiam employee, I find the timing of its financial distress suspect, arriving conveniently in support of this merger. I'm not asserting wrongdoing, but I believe the state should investigate Santiam's financial position independently before approving this deal.

This merger will limit health services in Marion County and will disproportionately affect the Santiam Canyon, a rural area that already faces disparities in access to timely care.

I do not trust Salem Health to manage this merger in a way that serves patients rather than its own market position. I urge the Oregon Health Authority to reject this merger. If Santiam truly needs a stronger financial partner, the state should encourage a different health system to acquire it instead, one that would preserve competition in Marion County rather than eliminate it.

Thank you for considering my comment.

Sincerely,

Alex Lorenz

133. 7/15/26

I'm a Salem Health employee, a woman, a mom to three kids and I want to share why I support the partnership between Salem Health and Santiam.

My experience with this health system has been genuinely supportive, both as an employee and as a mom navigating care for my own family. I've seen what it means to have real care close to home, from general and family care to specialty care, emergency care, and the tough cases that need real coordination and follow up. As a parent, I know how much it matters to have a local option when your kids or your family need help, instead of dealing with the added stress of travel and time away from home during an already hard moment.

I care about people having access to care where they live. I care about the cost families and health systems are dealing with. And I care that a community like ours has a health system built to actually last, not just get by year to year. From what I've seen and read about how this organization has grown in this area, this is about longevity. It's about making sure people can be treated here, in their own community, instead of being sent to Portland when they don't need to be.

This isn't about which system gives ""better"" care. This is about meeting people where they're at. Getting them stabilized, building an actual care plan, and connecting them with a care team that gets to know them, so they're not just a number in the system but a person their providers actually recognize.

To me, this partnership means stability. It's not political and it's not about getting bigger for the sake of it. It's about building a solid foundation so this health system can keep doing good work with its community and neighbors for a long time to come.

Amber Clark

134. 7/15/26

To Whom It May Concern,

I have worked at Santiam Hospital for the past 12 years, but my connection to this hospital started long before I became an employee. My grandma was part of the very first nursing staff when Santiam Hospital opened in 1953. I grew up with Dr. VanVeen as my doctor. He was one of Santiam Hospital's longest-serving physicians and cared for generations of families in this community, including mine. Like so many others, I experienced the kind of compassionate, personal care that has always made Santiam special. My ties to this hospital run deep. It's more than where I work—it has been part of my family's story and a big part of mine.

When I first learned that Santiam Hospital would need to partner with another health system, I'll admit it felt personal. Not because of what it meant for me or my job, but because it felt like something that has been such a big part of my life was going to change. That was hard.

After learning more about why this partnership is needed, I've come to believe that partnering with Salem Hospital is the best path forward for Santiam and for the communities we serve.

I've worked in the Women's Clinic since the day I started at Santiam. Taking care of women throughout every stage of life isn't just my job—it's something I truly care about. We get to be there during some of the most vulnerable moments in a woman's life. We celebrate with patients who finally see a healthy pregnancy after years of infertility. We help women through difficult decisions about surgery after living with pain for years. We walk alongside women as they navigate the physical and emotional changes that come with aging. In all of those moments, our goal is simple: to make sure they feel heard, cared for, and that they aren't going through it alone.

This partnership gives us the opportunity to keep doing exactly that.

I won't pretend that I don't have concerns about the unknown. Change is uncomfortable, especially when it involves something that means so much to so many people. I also understand why people have concerns about Regence, and I hope those issues can be worked through over time. But what worries me even more is the thought of not being able to continue serving our community the way we always have. That fear outweighs my fear of change by a long shot.

I truly believe Salem Hospital is the right partner. They have been caring for this region for decades, just like Santiam has. They understand our community, and I believe our missions and values are closely aligned. I don't think an out-of-state partner could offer the same understanding of the people we serve.

One thing I hope people remember is that this partnership doesn't change who we are. The same nurses, providers, medical assistants, receptionists, and staff who have been taking care of our patients for years will still be here. We'll still know our patients by name. We'll still celebrate with them, cry with them, and care for them the same way we always have. The heart of Santiam has never been the building or the name on the sign—it's the people.

I respectfully ask that you support the partnership between Santiam Hospital and Salem Hospital and move this decision forward as quickly as possible. None of us asked to be in this position, but I believe this partnership gives us the best chance to continue providing the local, compassionate care that our communities deserve.

Santiam Hospital has cared for my family for generations. It has given me the opportunity to spend the last 12 years caring for the families in our community. My hope is that this partnership allows Santiam to continue doing that for generations to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jenna Stoyles

135. 7/15/26

Members of the OHA, thank you for considering this emergency exemption for the partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital. I want to share why it's important to approve this merger for the patients of our Marion County community. I live and work in Salem and I feel lucky to have easy access to the emergency department, clinics, operating rooms, and inpatient units of Salem Health. I live only 10 minutes away from my primary care provider, the surgery center where I had my hip replaced, the building where I delivered my babies, the urgent care where my kids have been treated, and the lab where we get routine draws. Now I think of my community members, some who live in the canyon, one hour from Santiam Hospital. What if it wasn't there? What if their primary care provider's clinic closed? What if they couldn't access the ED? They'd have to drive 30 minutes farther to Salem Hospital. And what if all those patients had to utilize Salem Health's clinics and departments? There is already a long wait for primary care and specialists. There are not enough providers at Salem Health to support that population. Please consider approving the partnership so patients have the care and access they need when they need it.

Elisa Bledsoe

136. 7/16/26

I work for Salem Hospital but I live in Eugene Oregon. I understand what is at stake with a potential closure of Santiam hospital group because our sole hospital in Eugene was closed down (PeaceHealth Sacred Heart University District, Eugene) and now Riverbend in Springfield has been inundated with patients and wait times are through the roof. Care has also been greatly compromised due to patient influx and provider fatigue. I have seen this first hand recently while bringing a loved one into the ER in Riverbend for care. It was chaos, many of the care team of nurses were fatigued,

rude, no eye-contact etc. Patients are routinely in the hallways receiving care at both River Bend and Salem Hospital due to lack of beds, service line expertise etc. Bottom line: people will die if Santiam closes, like they are dying here in Eugene/Springfield. It is so bad here that I am wondering if I will be able to age safely in this region. Truly I love living here, but the health care landscape is terrifying. By allowing an immediate merger of Salem/Santiam, you will be supporting safe patient care in a very underserved region. Please consider immediate action so that patient suffering will be at a minimum. Thank you.

Kerry Scannell

137. 7/16/26

To continue to keep care available for our community members in the canyon, I believe the partnership between Salem Health and Santiam is imperative. With the shift in the financial stability of Santiam's system, they need a partner who can offer both the commitment and support to ensure that care continues to stay local, safe and offering an experience that patients deserve. Salem Health has successfully integrated multiple community based practices who have approached them with employment needs. This can and should be replicated for the Santiam system. While funding to Santiam could be provided in other ways, the support of a system like Salem Health who has shown itself to remain viable throughout a pandemic and unprecedented economic shifts is what Santiam needs to sustain long term. This partnership is about spreading systems that work and strengthening relationships that matter. Without this, the hardship to the community members served by Santiam will be multiplied- challenges to find care & travel extensively are things that will cause many to stop using preventative services. Scarcity of local services will increase morbidity and cost to patients and systems alike when emergent care and longer inpatient stays are the outcomes. Santiam has a system of providers and staff who extend themselves beyond the walls of their clinics and hospitals to serve the people that live in their community- but they simply cannot do more. I am in support of this partnership and will continue to hope for the excellent judgment of our governing bodies to approve this application.

Misti Shilhanek White

138. 7/16/26

I strongly support approving the emergency exemption for the proposed partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital & Clinics.

No family should have to wonder whether their loved one would have survived if emergency care had been closer.

I have friends and family in Detroit, Stayton, Sublimity, and Lyons who depend on having health care nearby. A recent emergency with my mom showed me how much every minute matters. She had a severe allergic reaction to a new medication, and her throat and tongue began swelling. We reached the hospital in about seven minutes, but by the time we checked in, she was already going in and out of consciousness.

I cannot imagine what would have happened if the closest hospital was unavailable and we had to drive another 15 or 20 minutes to Salem. The Santiam Canyon deserves reliable emergency care, local providers, clinics, and health care jobs. I hope OHA considers the real impact this decision will have and approves the emergency exemption.

Collin Pace

139. 7/16/26

I am in full support of the Salem Health-Santiam partnership. I think this is a great way to keep care in our region local while helping a small, more rural hospital keep access to care in the community. Salem Health has demonstrated that they support community health and can successively partner with other hospitals by how they have only improved and expanded care at West Valley Hospital in Dallas, OR.

Chelsea Zipse

140. 7/16/26

Santiam Hospital & Clinics

Dear Oregon Health Authority,

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

141. 7/16/26

The merger between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital seems like a promising step toward strengthening healthcare in our region. By working together, they have the opportunity to improve access to services, share resources, and expand care for patients while keeping healthcare close to home.

Jamie Gough

142. 7/16/26

I strongly support Salem Health's request for an emergency exemption. This approval will allow Salem Health to move forward in supporting Santiam Hospital & Clinics and help ensure our community continues to have access to quality local healthcare. It will provide the much-needed long-term support, resources to help Santiam Hospital grow and continue meeting the healthcare needs of those living in the Canyon and surrounding communities. I appreciate the dedicated physicians, nurses, and staff who

care for patients every day, and I encourage the Oregon Health Authority to approve this emergency exemption so Santiam Hospital & Clinics can continue providing and expanding the care our community depends on.

Rosetta Ziebart

143. 7/16/26

Save Santiam Hospital and healthcare in the Stayton/Canyon area!!!! What a blessing it would be to have Salem Health come in and help that community.

Sara Davis

144. 7/16/26

As you deliberate in Salem Health's emergency application to help the Santiam canyon's medical hospital there is no time to waste or delay. The answer is only one answer and that is approve it ASAP. If you allow this medical facility to collapse knowing there was a lifeline it is all on you. 60,000 people lose health care and our neighboring facilities do not have the capacity to pick up that kind of bed loss. Please approve their emergency application and help the situation today!! Many lives depend on it!!

Lyle Mordhorst

145. 7/16/26

I support the Salem Health/Santiam partnership. Competition will be a moot issue without this partnership since Santiam will have to abandon hospital and emergency services leaving Salem Health as the nearest place to go.

Kelly Sanders

146. 7/16/26

I wish to request that the OHA approve the partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital & Clinics.

With 13 locations (specialists/woman's health/primary care) under the umbrella of Santiam Hospital & Clinic and the closest ER for anyone up the canyon, the closure would be detrimental to receiving life-saving care in emergencies. In addition to the lack of a local urgent care clinic, telling patients they must now go further into Salem or

flood the Silverton Health system is irresponsible. Imagine my dismay when I tried to get an appointment with my primary care physician just this morning when they told me that to see my established provider of over 20 years, would be waiting until OCTOBER! Now, imagine trying to get established with a new provider where I have to drive at least 20 minutes away and jockey for an appointment with all of their current clients. This is something that is also compounded by the fact that currently Salem Hospital does not accept Blue Cross / Blue Shield. Because we have BCBS as part of our insurance in the family, we would now have to find a clinic even further away that hopefully takes BCBS. Thankfully, Santiam still takes BCBS and even though that is only guaranteed through the end of 2027, having that time for employers up the canyon to look at switching health plans as many of the larger employers in the area offer BCBS.

Your approval for the partnership would at least keep services at their current level through 2027 as far as insurance is concerned. It will also keep the people of the canyon in their current doctors and keep the availability of the hospital in Stayton open for emergencies. Could you imagine having to drive another 15 minutes into the Salem ER when you've been in a car accident and need immediate help because the hospital in Stayton had to close? Partnering with Salem Health keeps Santiam Hospital & Clinics open and providing essential services to the people of the Santiam Canyon.

Dorothy Loftin

147. 7/16/26

My family depends on Santiam for Our healthcare and we think this merger is a win-win for our Communities. I have had to be transported by ambulance twice to Salem for speciality life saving care and would appreciate additional specially providers at Santiam, even part time. Santiam has worked very hard to improve the OR and ED, with success.

The Santiam Canyon deserves the same access to care as more urban areas. We fully support the plan and hope it can happen soon. Our healthcare depends on it. Thank you.

Teri Harding

148. 7/16/26

I would like to reach out in support of the hopeful expedited response for Salem Health and Santiam's partnership. Many people, my family included, rely upon these organizations for many of their healthcare needs. They are vital and important to us within these communities, and beyond.

Amanda Stephens

149. 7/16/26

This will be a great development for our hospital and ensuring we can provide adequate care for our canyon patients. Really hoping the development goes through to approval.

Hailie Wright

150. 7/16/26

I am writing in support of the proposed affiliation between Santiam Hospital & Clinics and Salem Health Hospital & Clinics. One concern raised is that Salem does not have a Regence BCBS contract. While this is understandably important to those directly affected, I do not believe it should determine the long-term future of an affiliation that could benefit an entire region.

Regence is important; however, it represents only a portion of Oregon's insured population, less than 15%. The majority of Oregonians receive coverage through other commercial insurers, Medicare, Medicaid, or military coverage. Decisions about the future should be based on the needs of the entire community, rather than any single payer.

Another concern is what happens if this affiliation does not move forward. Santiam Hospital, like many independent rural hospitals, faces increasing financial, operational, and workforce challenges. Remaining independent indefinitely is not a realistic option. If we are unable to partner with a locally led, Oregon-based healthcare organization that understands our community and shares our mission, the alternative may eventually be to seek a partnership with a large national health system.

National organization priorities are often driven by decisions made hundreds or thousands of miles away. Those decisions may not reflect the unique needs, values, or

priorities of our rural communities. In my view, a locally governed partnership that invests in our communities is a far better outcome than a future in which local healthcare decisions are made by an out-of-state corporation with little connection to the people who live here.

Our community has supported Santiam Hospital for decades. It's only right to continue supporting our community into the future.

Thank you.

Jaime Sampson

151. 7/16/26

NO!!! What part of NO, don't you understand! The N or the O.... I'll switch to Silverton, Hospital! I refuse to go to Salem Hospital! Absolutely REFUSE!

Ellen Martin

152. 7/16/26

I support the proposed merger between Santiam Hospital and Salem Health. My home is in south Salem, and I work with Santiam Hospital and Clinics. In my former role as CEO of Salem Gastro, I had significant experience with Salem Health. I know the two entities and they complement one another.

Salem Health will bring capital and its lean management system to clinical operations at Santiam. Santiam Hospital and Clinics will bring its heart and example of community connection to Salem Health. When two entities and cultures merge, there is an opportunity for the combined organization to adopt the best of both organizations.

As a seasoned professional who has worked at Santiam for the last three months, I am deeply impressed with the executive team's talent, professionalism, care, and authenticity. Anyone who thinks this merger is a personal agenda or has occurred due to professional shortcomings is sorely mistaken. Instead, I have seen dedication, expertise, and savvy in both the executive and mid-level leadership teams.

This merger is required due to the challenges facing healthcare, in general, and rural healthcare, specifically. The reality is that hospitals are required to see everyone who shows up and demands treatment with or without the ability to pay or type of insurance. In the rural areas, the population is largely insured by Medicaid and

Medicare. There is a significant gap between what Medicaid and Medicare pay and what it costs to deliver care. At the same time, there is increasing pressure to increase wages (to recruit and retain staff.)

The only way hospitals and clinics can be financially viable is to have a significant commercial payer presence, relentlessly manage costs, fundraise, and apply for grants. Santiam has managed costs, fundraised, and landed grants. However, they are unable to influence the prevalence of commercial payers in the community.

For the sake of the Santiam Canyon, its patients and employees, I strongly urge you to approve this merger and to do so quickly for the benefit of the community, patients, and staff at Santiam and Salem Health.

Andrea L. Kamenca, MBA

153. 7/16/26

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed affiliation between Santiam Hospital and Clinics and Salem Health.

For over a decade, I have had the privilege of serving our community at Santiam Hospital and Clinics. Throughout that time, I have witnessed an unwavering commitment to providing compassionate, patient-centered care. Our staff takes pride in caring for neighbors, friends, and family members, and that dedication is what has made Santiam Hospital a trusted resource for our community.

The healthcare environment continues to change at a rapid pace, creating significant challenges for community hospitals. Growing financial pressures, workforce shortages, and increasing demands for specialized care require organizations to find innovative ways to remain sustainable while continuing to meet the needs of their patients. I believe this partnership represents an important investment in the future of healthcare for our region.

One of the greatest advantages of this affiliation is the opportunity to enhance the care available to our community. By partnering with Salem Health, Santiam Hospital and Clinics will have greater access to clinical expertise, specialized resources, and additional support that will allow us to expand services locally. This means more patients will be able to receive the care they need closer to home, improving convenience for families and reducing the need to travel for specialized treatment. As

our community grows and healthcare needs evolve, this partnership will better position us to respond with expanded services and improved access to high-quality care.

While this partnership brings new opportunities, it does not change what makes Santiam Hospital and Clinics special. The heart of our organization has always been our people. Our physicians, nurses, caregivers, and support staff are deeply committed to serving this community with compassion, professionalism, and excellence. Those values are not changing; they will continue to guide every interaction and every decision we make.

As the Emergency Department Nurse Manager, I see firsthand how important it is for our community to have dependable access to emergency care and other essential healthcare services. Patients come to us during some of the most difficult moments of their lives, placing their trust in our team to provide exceptional care. This affiliation will help ensure we have the resources, support, and clinical partnerships necessary to continue earning that trust while expanding the care we are able to provide.

I believe this partnership is an opportunity to strengthen healthcare throughout our region. It will help ensure Santiam Hospital and Clinics remains a vibrant community hospital while creating new opportunities to improve patient care, broaden available services, and increase access to healthcare for the people who depend on us.

I ask the Oregon Health Authority to approve this partnership so Santiam Hospital can continue building a healthier future for our community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Nicole Montoya

Emergency Department Nurse Manager

Santiam Hospital and Clinics

154. 7/16/26

I have lived in the Santiam Canyon my entire life. I was born at Santiam Hospital, my children were born at Santiam Hospital, and now my grandchildren have been born there as well. In addition to my personal connection, I am also an employee of Santiam

Hospital and Clinics. Because of these experiences, I care deeply about the future of healthcare in our community.

I respectfully urge the Oregon Health Authority to approve the proposed partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital. This partnership was pursued by Santiam because we recognized the need for a strong, sustainable healthcare partner to help ensure we can continue serving our community for years to come. Like many independent rural healthcare organizations, Santiam has faced increasing financial pressures driven by rising costs, workforce shortages, and inadequate insurance reimbursement. These challenges are affecting healthcare organizations across the country and are not the result of Salem Health's actions.

Salem Health is the most logical and beneficial partner for Santiam. Located only 16 miles away, Salem is already the primary referral destination for many of our patients requiring specialty care, advanced diagnostics, or services beyond what our hospital can currently provide. We also regularly transfer emergency patients to Salem when they require a higher level of care.

This partnership has the potential to strengthen—not diminish—healthcare access for the Santiam Canyon. It will provide greater stability for our hospital, improve recruitment and retention of healthcare professionals, expand specialty services, and create opportunities to grow our hospital and primary care clinics as our community continues to grow. Most importantly, it will allow more patients to receive high-quality care closer to home, reducing the need to travel longer distances for essential medical services.

As both a lifelong resident and a healthcare employee, I believe this partnership represents the best opportunity to preserve and strengthen local healthcare for future generations. I respectfully ask that you approve this partnership so Santiam Hospital can continue serving the communities that have depended on it for decades.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sinnamee Baney

155. 7/16/26

This merger should be approved and granted an emergency exemption. Maternal healthcare needs more options, and this is a great way to increase access for the Willamette Valley.

Christine Morales

156. 7/16/26

I am an employee of Santiam Hospital & Clinics, and I strongly support taking the necessary steps to keep Santiam open and preserve healthcare services in the Santiam Canyon. Santiam is more than a hospital building. It is a critical access point for emergency care, diagnostic services, outpatient treatment, specialty care and ongoing medical care for patients throughout Stayton and the surrounding rural communities. Many of our patients are older adults, families, individuals with limited transportation and people who cannot easily travel to Salem for every medical need. Closing or significantly reducing services at Santiam would create serious consequences for the entire region. Patients experiencing strokes, heart attacks, traumatic injuries, severe infections and other emergencies would face longer transportation times before receiving treatment. Those additional minutes can affect a patient's recovery, long-term health and chance of survival. A closure would also send more patient to already busy hospitals and ER in Salem. This would increase overcrowding, extend wait times and place additional pressure on emergency medical services, ambulances and healthcare workers throughout Marion County. As an employee, I see the work that happens behind the scenes to support safe, accurate and timely patient care. Santiam's employees understand the communities they serve and are deeply committed to their patients. Preserving the hospital also protects a significant local workforce and the families, businesses and community organization that depend upon it. I understand that any acquisition or partnership deserves careful oversight. However, that review should recognize the immediate danger of losing local healthcare services. Appropriate accountability and protection for patients can be required without allowing delays to result in the hospital's closure. I respectfully ask state leaders and regulators to act urgently to preserve Santiam. Please protect continued access to emergency and local healthcare, support the employees who provide that care and prevent rural residents from losing an essential community resource.

Libby Schott

157. 7/16/26

I'm in support of the affiliation between Santiam Hospital and Clinics and Salem Health, people in the canyon and surrounding areas need to have access to health care and support Santiam Hospital and Clinics ability to sustain and grown to meet the needs of the community.

Leah Roberts

158. 7/16/26

I have worked at Santiam hospital and clinics for over 8 years, and I not only support the affiliation between Salem health and Santiam, but I know it is the best thing for our community and patients. Please approve this affiliation so Santiam can keep providing care our rural communities. Without this affiliation I worry of the negative impact it could have for us as employees and patients.

Guadalupe Garibaldi

159. 7/16/26

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Santiam Hospital & Clinics, we write with renewed urgency to express our strong support for our proposed affiliation with Salem Health Hospitals & Clinics. Since our prior correspondence, Santiam has filed an emergency exemption application with the Oregon Health Authority Health Care Market Oversight program and has withdrawn from the comprehensive review process.

Santiam Hospital & Clinics is a locally governed, community-based health system that has served the Santiam Canyon since 1953. We as a Board are deeply committed to ensuring that health care in our region remains accessible, community-centered, and guided by local leadership. Our Board has been proactive and deliberate in seeking the right partner for Santiam. This affiliation is not a last-minute decision; it follows significant evaluation, engagement, and careful consideration of how to preserve care for the Santiam Canyon. Salem Health remains the most appropriate path forward because it serves the same regional patient population, shares our commitment to community-based care, and can strengthen coordination across services so patients can continue to receive care close to home.

Salem Health also brings financial stability and organizational resources essential to securing Santiam's future. Salem Health's commitment remains in place, including a minimum \$61 million investment into Santiam to improve care delivery in the Canyon. That commitment is essential to sustaining local health care, reducing uncertainty, and allowing critical planning work to continue.

The need for timely action has become emergent. Santiam is facing mounting financial pressures, growing operating losses, and minimal cash reserves, which together create an imminent risk that the organization will be unable to sustain essential services without timely partnership support. While the Board has worked responsibly to identify a strong partner, Santiam no longer has the time required for a prolonged regulatory pathway. A timely OHA decision is needed now to protect local access to care and allow the affiliation planning work to move forward.

One pressing example continues to be our electronic health record system. Santiam's current Epic contract ends in June 2027, and transitioning to a new medical record system will require approximately \$12 million—resources Santiam does not have available independently. Delays jeopardize the time needed for Epic planning, implementation, training, and a safe transition for staff, providers, and patients. Salem Health is uniquely equipped to support the substantial investment and operational planning needed to preserve continuity of care and minimize disruption to clinical operations.

Our Board wants to be clear: we are not seeking to look beyond our region or state for a partner. Maintaining local connections, preserving community voice, sustaining community trust, and ensuring decisions remain grounded in the needs of the Santiam Canyon and are central to our approach. This affiliation with Salem Health allows us to achieve those priorities while strengthening access to care and ensuring long-term viability.

For all of these reasons, we respectfully ask for your approval of this affiliation. We also request timely consideration of Santiam's emergency exemption application so that urgent financial and operational pressures can be addressed without further delay. Prompt action is essential to maintaining access to high-quality care, protecting local leadership, preparing for the Epic transition, and securing the future of Santiam Hospital & Clinics for the communities we are proud to serve.

We welcome any questions or opportunities for further discussion.

Respectfully,

Board of Directors

Santiam Hospital & Clinics

Victor Kintz, Chair	Genny Baldwin, Vice Chair	Pamela Ray, Secretary
Mike Odenthal	Maryann Meredith	Ed Diehl
Silvia Hernandez	Emily Newton	James Bayuk

160. 7/16/26

Please promptly approve this affiliation. It is vital to our rural community's prolonged economic survival. Our community deserves to receive high-quality, locally managed healthcare where we live. Geographically isolated communities such as Idahna, Detroit, Gates, and Niagara depend on Santiam Hospital for medical care. Denying this affiliation will drive a permanent and irreversible stake through the heart of the Santiam Canyon. We live here. We work here. We recreate here. We depend on the hospital not only for healthcare, but economic vitality directly related to Santiam Hospital's workforce and community support.

Deana Freres

161. 7/16/26

I am a resident of Sublimity and I have had Regence Blue Cross since retiring in 2019. I am strongly opposed to this merger as it would force me to seek another insurance provider. It's not my problem that Salem Health rejected Regence when Santiam accepted it. I don't like what I am hearing about this process not following the normal vetting process. Tired of things getting done behind closed doors and the public getting to pay for it. A Strong NO on this merger! A strong NO on subverting the normal vetting process!

Martin Oliverson

162. 7/16/26

Hello,

I am unaware why the public has to ask a Health Authority to allow for cutting through the red tape to keep a vital community need for a rural hospital in the Santiam Canyon as I do not know what the stoppers could be, but here I am asking.

Anticipating that this will be resolved for that community and the greater Salem community that Salem Health cares for.

Thank You,

Darci Cimino

163. 7/16/26

I moved to Scio two years ago and have been to Santiam ER twice for treatment both times in which I was provided excellent; timely and compassionate care. I am writing to show my support and consider this hospital and its clinics an absolute necessity for the Santiam Canyon and all the small towns east of Salem all the way to the pass past Detroit.

It serves a community of over 40,000 pts they will have nowhere to go except Salem for acute or Urgent Care needs.

I also happen to be an RN of 30yrs and am a recent employee of Santiam hospital and have found it to be the most cohesive caring hospital I have ever worked. Have worked at four in OR. I could get a job anywhere but have chosen this place due to its excellent care and staff.

Please consider this message from a thankful community member and medical professional.

Sincerely,

Jolai Hilton

164. 7/16/26

To the Health Care Market Oversight Program (HCMO):

I am writing in support of the proposed Affiliation between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital. My perspective comes from more than 35 years of healthcare experience as

a paramedic with Santiam Ambulance. I have worked directly with patients during some of the most critical moments of their lives and have seen firsthand the importance of strong, coordinated healthcare systems.

From an EMS perspective, patient care does not begin or end at the hospital doors. Successful outcomes depend on seamless communication and coordination between ambulance services, emergency departments, primary care providers, specialists, and hospitals throughout the region. The proposed merger has the potential to strengthen these connections and improve continuity of care for the Santiam Canyon.

One significant benefit I see is the expansion and integration of Epic as a shared electronic health record (EHR) platform. As a frontline provider, I understand the value of having timely access to accurate patient information. A unified Epic system can improve communication between providers, reduce duplication of tests and procedures, enhance patient safety, and allow caregivers to make better-informed clinical decisions. When healthcare organizations share the same EHR platform, patient information can follow the patient more effectively across the continuum of care, whether they are treated at Santiam Hospital, Salem Health, a specialty clinic, or in an emergency setting.

For EMS providers, better integration of patient records can also improve coordination during emergency transport and transfers. The ability for healthcare teams to access the same information helps reduce delays, minimizes the risk of communication errors, and supports a more efficient transition of care. Ultimately, these improvements benefit the patients and families who rely on our healthcare system.

I have also witnessed the increasing challenges facing community hospitals, including workforce shortages, rising costs, and growing regulatory requirements. Partnerships such as this affiliation can provide the resources, stability, and clinical support necessary to preserve local healthcare services while expanding access to specialized care. Maintaining a strong, sustainable hospital in our community is essential for the long-term health and well-being of residents throughout the Santiam Canyon and Mid-Willamette Valley.

Santiam Hospital is not large enough to independently implement and sustain an Epic electronic health record system. The cost of Epic licensing, infrastructure, specialized IT support, training, and ongoing maintenance can be prohibitive for a small,

independent community hospital. As a result, Santiam would need to rely on a larger health system partner to gain access to and support an Epic platform. In comparison, Salem Health's EHR resources are local, established, and already integrated within the region, making them a practical and strategic choice. Partnering with a nearby organization provides Santiam Hospital with access to advanced EHR capabilities, improved interoperability, and long-term sustainability while avoiding the significant financial and operational burden of managing Epic independently.

As someone who has dedicated more than three decades to serving patients as a paramedic with Santiam Hospital Ambulance, I believe this merger represents an opportunity to strengthen regional healthcare, improve care coordination, leverage the benefits of a unified Epic EHR system, and ensure continued access to high-quality healthcare for our communities.

Sincerely

Paul Hartmann EMT-P

165. 7/16/26

Dear Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed partnership/affiliation between Santiam hospital and Salem Health. I respectfully request your approval of this transaction because it is essential to preserving healthcare access for our community and ensuring that Santiam remains open and able to serve patients for years to come.

Rural and community hospitals across the country continue to face significant financial, workforce, and operational challenges. The proposed partnership offers a sustainable path forward by strengthening resources, enhancing operational stability, and allowing continued investment in patient care services. In the past 6 years I have been employed at Santiam I have watched growth and excellence in our patient care. As a community member for 55 years I take pride in this hospital. Without this affiliation, the viability of our local hospital is at risk leaving many of our community without healthcare.

This partnership is not about eliminating local healthcare—it is about preserving it. The proposed partnership would allow the hospital to maintain its commitment to serving

the Santiam Canyon while gaining the additional support, expertise, and infrastructure needed to meet increasing healthcare demands. Hospital leadership has publicly stated that the organization's identity, culture, workforce, and commitment to community care will remain.

Approving this affiliation will help:

- Preserve access to essential healthcare services close to home.
- Protect jobs and support the recruitment and retention of healthcare professionals.
- Improve financial sustainability and operational resilience.
- Expand access to specialty care and advanced services.
- Ensure continued investment in facilities, technology, and patient care programs.

For many patients, especially older adults, low-income families, and those living in rural areas, local access to healthcare is not merely a convenience—it is a necessity. Keeping our hospital open means reducing barriers to care, improving health outcomes, and supporting the economic vitality of the entire community.

I respectfully urge your agency to approve this partnership and recognize the significant benefits it will provide to patients, families, employees, and the broader community.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this matter and for your commitment to ensuring access to high-quality healthcare.

Sincerely,

Kristi RN, BSN

166. 7/16/26

Please agree to the merger of Santiam Hospital and Salem Health. Santiam hospital is extremely important to this community. We moved to Aumsville in 2022 for the wonderful health services provided by Santiam Hospital. As a senior citizen it is important to have health services close by. Have used Santiam Hospital and Salem health services and have been extremely satisfied with my care at both. Merger the 2 would be wonderful for me as a patient.

Please agree to the merger for our the health and safety of our communities.

Thank you

Nancy Kandra

167. 7/16/26

I respectfully ask the Oregon Health Authority to expedite its consideration of the Salem Health–Santiam Hospital emergency-exemption request. Santiam Hospital’s 24-hour emergency room, ambulance service, clinics, maternity care, and community-based medical services are vital to the Santiam Canyon, Marion County, Linn County, and the greater Salem region.

Delaying a decision could lead to staffing reductions, lost services, longer emergency travel times etc

Please act promptly to preserve Santiam Hospital and continued access to local healthcare.

Santiam Hospital has served this community since 1953. Please send your message today and encourage your family, friends, neighbors, and community leaders to do the same.

Thank you,

Rhonda Bupp

168. 7/16/26

Greetings,

My name is Anna Munson. I am a resident of Salem and a Candidate for Oregon State Legislature House District 19.

I respectfully ask the Oregon Health Authority to expedite its consideration of the Salem Health–Santiam Hospital emergency-exemption request. Santiam Hospital’s 24-hour emergency room, ambulance service, clinics, maternity care, and community-based medical services are vital to the Santiam Canyon, Marion County, Linn County, and the greater Salem region.

Delaying a decision could lead to staffing reductions, lost services, longer emergency travel times, and additional pressure on other regional hospitals.

Please act promptly to preserve Santiam Hospital and continued access to local healthcare.

Santiam Hospital has served this community since 1953 and has a long history of being fiscally responsible and a pillar in the Healthcare community of the Mid-Willamette Valley.

Sincerely,

Anna Munson

Candidate HD19

169. 7/17/26

Good Day,

I have the luxury of living in the Santiam Canyon. My husband is 80 and my mother who lives with us is 86 years old. Having Santiam Hospital in Stayton is a NECESSITY for our family. If anything were to ever happen to that hospital we would have to sell our home and move closer to medical care. My husband and my mother are both patients of Dr. Fatima Barr at Santiam. We've lived in many affluent areas of the United States and the quality of care she provides is AMAZING! BAR-NONE! The loving professional staff at Santiam Hospital in Stayton shocks me. My mother has crazy veins and is so difficult to get a blood draw or an IV placed. I recall one time in San Jose, California in a big beautiful hospital - they could not get an I. placed, and they had to Life Flight a surgeon out of San Francisco - to place the IV in her neck. Seasoned head nurses were crying; it was horrific. Twice this year my mother has gone in for routine bloodwork, and sweet, young staff drew her blood on the first try and said "all done, okay you have a nice day". I really can't say enough how important and vital it is to know that serious quality care is right down the road - especially in case of an emergency - as my husband is constantly working hard on our 5 acres and is always on tall ladder and roofs. I also run a business and in the event that any of my clients should require medical care - it's a comfort to me knowing that help is only 5 minutes away.

Sincerely,

Heidi M Anderson

170. 7/17/26

I ask that you approve the merger and acquisition of Santiam Hospital by Salem Health asap. We must keep Santiam open and functioning well. I receive health care there for primary care and specialists. It is a true asset to the community and provides many essential services and key jobs. I don't understand why it's taking so long. You have had enough time. Stop holding it up and let a good and necessary thing go forward!

Please confirm you got this if you can.

Thank you.

Ed Chamberland

171. 7/17/26

Commissioner Tucker [submitted a public comment](#).

172. 7/17/26

My name is Kendra Childress, and I have had the privilege of working for Santiam Hospital & Clinics for the past 23 years. I currently serve in our Revenue Cycle Department, but my statement is not only as an employee but I am also speaking as a lifelong advocate for this community, as a patient at Santiam, and as a wife & mother.

Above all else, my support for this affiliation comes from one place: preserving access to high-quality healthcare for the people of the Santiam Canyon and surrounding rural communities with local governance.

Santiam Hospital & Clinics is more than a healthcare organization. It is where neighbors care for neighbors. It is where families receive care close to home. It is a trusted community institution that has served generations of local Canyon residents. My own family is part of that story. I delivered all three of my children at Santiam, and throughout my life my family & myself have had the opportunity to receive care here alongside so many members of our community. I also serve on our local youth sports recreation association's Board of Directors (MCGRA). Santiam's low-cost sports

physicals provide a clear pathway for our youth athletes to obtain clearance to participate in sporting activities locally. Dozens more examples of Santiam's commitment to serve our community exist in our SIT team, wildfire response, sponsorships & community events.

Like many rural hospitals across Oregon and the nation, Santiam has faced extraordinary financial challenges. We have continued to operate long term on incredibly thin margins because the mission has always been larger than the balance sheet. While none of us would have chosen to be in this position, I believe this affiliation represents the best opportunity to preserve local healthcare services rather than risk losing them altogether.

For our community, the greatest benefit is ensuring that patients can seamlessly continue receiving care close to home. Losing local access to our hospital, clinics, emergency services, specialty care, and the healthcare professionals who know our community would have profound consequences for the families who live here. Rural healthcare is not simply about convenience; it is about timely access, continuity of care, and the health of an entire community. I've spent the majority of my career at Santiam Medical Clinic in Mill City. The hardship that would be created without that Clinic for our patients in outlying communities would be near catastrophic. I've witnessed what losing the pharmacy in town did. Santiam recognized the need and is in the process of remodeling a building in Mill City and opening a pharmacy later this year.

As an employee, I also believe this affiliation offers something equally important: professional stability. More than 700 Santiam employees dedicate themselves every day to caring for this community. Those employees are also parents, spouses, neighbors, volunteers, and community members. The current affiliation agreement's commitment to honoring employee longevity and preserving positions recognizes the tremendous value of the people who have built Santiam into what it is today. That stability benefits not only employees but also our patients, who depend on experienced caregivers and trusted relationships.

What makes Santiam truly special is our culture. We may not be the largest health system or the most financially lucrative, but from the bedside to the front desk, from environmental services to surgery, from our clinics to our Revenue Cycle team, we share a common purpose: asking, "What is the next best thing for the patient?"

Every department contributes to that mission. While my work is in the Coding Dept of the Revenue Cycle, helping patients navigate the financial aspects of their healthcare is also an important part of their experience. Caring for patients means caring for the whole person, including helping reduce the stress and uncertainty that can come with receiving medical care.

I am encouraged that this affiliation seeks to preserve local governance, protect our medical staff and employees, and maintain the community-focused culture that has defined Santiam for decades. I hope this partnership brings not only financial stability but also additional resources that allow us to continue expanding and strengthening the care we provide while preserving the local decision-making and relationships that make Santiam unique.

I turn this back to the HCMO board and ask "What is best for the patients of the Santiam Canyon?" Don't worry I'll give you the answer: Local timely access to healthcare with local governance. The affiliation with Salem provides that pathway. From each aspect, patient care, employment stability, & community resource support. If denied, other options Santiam will be forced to explore will not be provide the continuity of care in the patient experience & stability we desperately need.

My support for this affiliation is ultimately support for our patients, our employees, and the future of healthcare in the Santiam Canyon. I want future generations including my children to have the same opportunity my family has had—to receive exceptional care close to home from people who truly know, are a part of, and care about their community.

Kendra Childress, CPC, CEMC, CRHCP

Coding Operations Supervisor

Santiam Hospital & Clinics

173. 7/17/26

To the Oregon Health Authority,

Rural healthcare access is essential to the health and well-being of a community. Having been born and raised in rural Marion County, I have firsthand experience with the challenges that rural residents face when accessing medical care. Because of that

experience, I feel compelled to speak in support of Salem Health Hospitals and Clinics' merger with Santiam Hospital and Clinics.

One reality that is often overlooked is transportation. While public transportation may appear to be available on paper, it is not a practical or reliable option for many rural residents who need medical care in Salem or other larger communities. Limited routes, extended travel times, and infrequent schedules create significant barriers for individuals seeking timely healthcare. When public transportation is not an option, private medical transportation services can cost hundreds of dollars if transportation is not covered by insurance.

This is not just an issue I have experienced personally. I have driven multiple family members more than 30 minutes to reach the nearest emergency department and doctors' appointments because there were no reasonable alternatives. Professionally, I have also been one of many individuals helping coordinate transportation and connect people with resources in Polk County for access to medical services throughout Dallas, Monmouth, Independence, and surrounding communities. Many of the people seeking assistance are already facing social and economic challenges that are made even more difficult by unreliable or unavailable transportation. It is common to hear concerns about transportation services being unavailable, last-minute cancellations, or costs that quickly become unaffordable, particularly when ongoing treatments require multiple appointments.

In addition, I have served as a volunteer driver and medical advocate for an elderly woman in rural Marion County who lacked transportation to medical appointments. She suffered from multiple chronic conditions that rapidly deteriorated as her ability to access care diminished. Virtual appointments were not a realistic alternative because she did not have the technology or reliable internet access necessary to receive care remotely. Her experience reflects the reality faced by many rural residents who depend on nearby healthcare services. These are the very patients who would struggle most if they were required to travel additional distances from Santiam to Salem Health or Silverton for routine, specialty, or emergency care.

For these reasons, I strongly support Salem Health's continued investment in maintaining healthcare services in the Santiam Canyon. The Stayton hospital is a vital resource for the surrounding communities, and losing local access to care would have grave consequences. Requiring patients to travel farther for emergency, inpatient, or

specialty services would increase transportation costs, delay care, and create additional barriers for those who are already vulnerable.

The individuals most affected would be those who can least afford another obstacle to receiving care, including older adults, veterans, people with disabilities, low-income families, and others experiencing social disparities. Preserving healthcare services close to home is not simply a matter of convenience; it is a matter of equitable access, better health outcomes, and stronger rural communities.

I respectfully encourage community members and decision-makers to support Salem Health's efforts to continue serving the Santiam Canyon. Maintaining local healthcare services helps ensure that rural Oregonians have access to the care they need, when they need it, and strengthens the long-term health of the communities that call the Santiam Canyon home. Please approve the urgently needed emergency exemption.

Sincerely,

Crystal R. Rostocil

174. 7/17/26

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed affiliation between Santiam Hospital & Clinics and Salem Hospital/Health. I offer this perspective as both an employee of Santiam Hospital & Clinics and a patient of a Santiam Hospital clinic as well as a resident of Stayton. Because I see the importance of this organization from both sides, as someone who works within the system and as someone who personally relies on its care, I believe this affiliation is an important step toward preserving essential hospital and clinic services for the patients and families who depend on them.

Santiam has long served as a critical community health resource. Its local presence helps ensure that residents can receive timely care close to home, including primary care, emergency care, specialty services, and ongoing support through local clinics. Maintaining these services is especially important for rural and smaller communities where distance, transportation and timely access can create real barriers to care.

An affiliation with Salem Hospital offers an opportunity to strengthen Santiam Hospital's long-term stability while preserving access to care in the communities it

serves. The additional clinical, operational, staffing and technology resources available through a larger health system can help support quality care, improve continuity for patients and sustain services that might otherwise be at risk.

I respectfully urge the Oregon Health Authority to consider the significant community benefit of this affiliation and the importance of maintaining accessible, local health care for Santiam Hospital's patients. I support approval of the affiliation because it can help protect continued access to care, strengthen the regional health care system and provide greater stability for patients, providers, employees and the broader community.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input and for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Pamm Karres

Stayton, Oregon

Resident for 6 Years

Santiam Hospital & Clinics employee for 5½ Years.

175. 7/17/26

A bit about myself: I am a current employee of Santiam, a member of the community, a patient of one of the family medicine clinics, the health and wellness clinic, and a former patient of the women's clinic and the orthopedic clinic. I graduated from Santiam Canyon High School, I live in Lyons, and my parents live in Mill City. I have a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and am dual certified in billing and coding. I started with Santiam in 2023 and work in the Revenue Department. My time at Santiam is not as long as some, but I love my team and I would do anything for them.

I have yet to comment publicly about my opinion on this merge for many reasons, but based on the information available to me via the documents publicly available on the HCMO page and the information we have managed to get from our upper management, I felt the need to do SOMETHING... and this seems to be the only thing I really can do.

As someone who prefers to stay informed and up to date on things that directly impact me and my family, words cannot describe the feelings I truly have about the current situation with Santiam. Distraught is one word that comes to mind, but it doesn't truly meet the full extent. There are many factors at play here, and I do feel that many people are not looking at the full picture.

My parents both have employer-sponsored healthcare plans - the only option for them is Regence BlueCross/BlueShield. They do not have an option to get a different insurance at this time. When Salem's contract with Regence ended, I was upset, but I understood - costs associated with providing healthcare are continuing to rise, and reimbursement rates from many payers are NOT meeting those increases. Inflation is everywhere, not just in our grocery stores, and when insurance companies "negotiate" rates that are below what actually covers the service provided, it leads to situations where hospitals, clinics, and other medical facilities cannot continue to operate. I watched that situation like a hawk, hoping for a better outcome, but it didn't end up happening. What was rough was when they absolutely refused to let my mom see her neurologist even as a self-pay patient. Thankfully her primary care physician was willing to take on those prescriptions, but not everyone was so lucky.

TO REITERATE: I CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN HOPE THAT REGENCE WILL BE WILLING TO NEGOTIATE RATES THAT ARE ACTUALLY FEASIBLE FOR SALEM HEALTH TO BECOME IN-NETWORK AGAIN. MEDICAL FACILITIES CANNOT KEEP THEIR DOORS OPEN IF INSURERS CONTINUE TO REIMBURSE AT RATES THAT DO NOT COVER THE COST OF PROVIDING THOSE SERVICES -- MY ISSUE WITH THIS SITUATION IS THE REFUSAL TO SEE PATIENTS WITH REGENCE AS SELF-PAY.

I have read the documents submitted to OHA (the ones available). As stated above, I have a BSc in business administration, and prior to my work at Santiam, I worked in store management for a PNW based chain of members-only retail stores, and as the manager for a small construction company. The statements made in the HCMO-2: Request for Emergency Exemption are alarming to say the least. I read that document and just sobbed. Financial projections showing the company I work for potentially not being able to make payroll after the end of Q3? Horrifying as an employee, but as a person who lives in this Canyon, this is no longer about "do we want to merge with

Salem?” This is about survival. This is about keeping us in this community. This is about still being able to provide care for people locally.

If this merge fails, there is a very very high probability that Santiam will cease to exist within a year. All of our management is saying that is not the case, but if we do not merge, we lose our access to Epic (the current program used for medical records and billing), which we obtained through a contract with St. Charles (I will keep my opinions on that organization to myself for the purposes of this, but know that they have been horrible to work with), on June 30th, 2027. We had to go through mediation with St. Charles to get the 3 years we got with them, I can only imagine how horrendous it would be to try to negotiate more time with them. Santiam cannot afford to purchase Epic on its own, and even if we could, they will not sell to a hospital with less than 250 beds. So how do we see patients if we have no EMR?

The simple answer? We don't.

The HCMO-2 documentation shows us insolvent essentially by October with conservative projections (it seems the projections are redacted so I can't analyze those). With certainty, if no affordable EMR alternative is located, we die June 30, 2027. And that date doesn't even take into account the possibility of continuing to lose money this year. When the HCMO application was submitted originally, we had about 16 months before we had to transition off of St. Charles' Epic. Now we are down to 9 months with no real answer and are facing the possibility of having to pay for yet another expensive EMR transition without the funds to do so.

This is NOT about Salem acquiring another clinic or specialty. This is about Salem affiliating with Santiam to prevent the deaths of a rural hospital, 6 rural primary care offices, and 6 specialty clinics (7 if you count Santiam Wound & Infusion Center, which I absolutely do), all of which this canyon so DESPERATELY NEEDS. Potentially losing a contract with Regence is NOTHING in comparison to completely losing these facilities in an area that needs them.

176. 7/17/26

I am a current employee of Santiam Hospital. I am so happy to be here, I love the small town community feel and it is a dream come true to be an employee. This is such meaningful work, as without this hospital and these clinics, Oregon would be suffering an even greater healthcare crisis than it already is. I also love Salem Health. I

have worked there as well. Merging the two makes the most sense financially and into the future. I am excited for the future and all of the financial stability that Salem Health will bring to Santiam and the Canyon. Salem Health will help us expand our services and continue to fill the needs of all the small towns in this area. I've previously lived in Portland, and it is scary to think we all may have to travel to Portland for healthcare, as Salem Health will be overwhelmed if Santiam were to be forced to close down. Please don't turn your back on us because we live in a rural area.

Ronda Hooper

177. 7/17/26

I work at Santiam Hospital and Clinics. I strongly encourage this to be approved. I love working at the local hospital and I want to continue to work there. Please approve the request so we can continue to serve the community we all love so much. As an employee at Santiam I am 100% on board with this. Please approve this

Brandi Church

178. 7/17/26

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing in support of the proposed affiliation between Santiam Hospital & Clinics and Salem Health. As both a healthcare professional and a longtime resident of the Santiam Canyon community, I strongly believe this partnership is critical to preserving healthcare access for our region.

I worked for Salem Health for 22 years, and it was not an easy decision to leave an organization that had been such a significant part of my professional life. However, I chose to accept a position with Santiam Hospital in order to work closer to home and better serve my local community. In doing so, I was able to bring valuable knowledge, experience, and best practices gained during my years at Salem Health to Santiam Hospital.

I have now been employed by Santiam Hospital for nearly 19 years and have witnessed firsthand the dedication of its staff and the vital role the hospital plays in our community. I would be more than happy to once again work alongside Salem Health through this affiliation, and I believe both organizations have much to gain from combining their strengths for the benefit of patients.

I have been a resident of Stayton for 27 years and have seen how deeply Santiam Hospital is woven into the fabric of our community. It is far more than a healthcare facility; it is a trusted resource that families depend upon during some of the most critical moments of their lives.

The loss or weakening of Santiam Hospital would be detrimental to local residents. Community members need access to local healthcare providers and hospital services. Without them, many individuals would face significant barriers to receiving timely medical care.

Additionally, Santiam Hospital operates the only hospital-based ambulance service in Oregon. The importance of this service cannot be overstated. Losing or disrupting this system would have catastrophic consequences for emergency medical response throughout our region and could jeopardize the health and safety of countless residents.

Santiam Hospital is also the only hospital serving the Santiam Canyon area. For many emergencies, time is critical. Requiring patients to travel much greater distances for care could result in delayed treatment and, in some cases, could mean the difference between life and death. Some patients simply may not survive transportation to a more distant facility.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the State of Oregon to approve and support the affiliation between Santiam Hospital & Clinics and Salem Health. This partnership represents an opportunity to strengthen local healthcare services, preserve access to essential medical care, protect emergency response capabilities, and ensure the long-term sustainability of healthcare in our community.

Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to protecting the health and well-being of Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Becky Culver

Stayton, Oregon

Resident for 27 Years

Employee, Santiam Hospital & Clinics (19 Years)

Former Employee, Salem Health (22 Years)

179. 7/17/26

I am writing in support of the proposed partnership between Santiam Hospital & Clinics and Salem Health. I am both an employee of Santiam and a resident of the community we serve. My husband and I just bought a home in Stayton last year and I accepted a position at Santiam with the intention of working here until retirement. As a community member, I understand firsthand how important it is for our community to have access to high-quality, local healthcare.

Santiam has been a vital part of our community for many years, and I believe this partnership is an important step toward ensuring that care remains available for patients now and into the future. As healthcare everywhere continues to face financial and operational challenges, timely action is essential. Delaying this process will create unnecessary uncertainty for employees, patients, and the communities that rely on Santiam for their care.

From my experience working at Santiam, I have seen the dedication of our physicians, nurses, and staff to providing compassionate, high-quality care. I firmly believe partnering with Salem Health will strengthen that mission by providing additional resources and stability, whereas a denial from OHA would assuredly limit the scope of care Santiam currently offers and cease any ambitions to expand care and services to our community. As someone who lives in the area, I also recognize how important it is for families to have healthcare close to home. Many patients would face significant hardship if local services were reduced or unavailable.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask Oregon Health Authority to approve Santiam Hospital & Clinics' request to partner with Salem Health and to allow it to move forward as quickly as possible. I believe this decision is in the best interest of our patients, our employees, and the long-term health of our community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Stefani Bailey

180. 7/17/26

I have worked at Santiam Hospital for the past six years, serving the community where I was raised and now raise my own family. I support the proposed affiliation with Salem

Health because I believe it is essential to ensuring that Santiam Hospital can continue providing high quality care to our patients for years to come. I believe this partnership will help strengthen our hospital and preserve access to the services our community needs and depend on. If the affiliation is not approved, I am concerned about the potential impact on both my coworkers and the community. My hope is that this affiliation will help secure a strong and sustainable future for our hospital and allow us to continue to provide exceptional care close to home.

Amber Hill

181. 7/17/26

Given that my original comment about wanting this to proceed so that Santiam didn't just go under doesn't carry over to this new transaction, here is a new comment.

I work for Salem Health, but I don't live in their service district. However, I do live in a rural area where healthcare choice is limited. If the local hospital was to go under, then it would be even more limited.

Due to their current financial situation, I believe that if Santiam does not merge with Salem Health, then they will probably not survive.

While I don't believe in monopolies in any given market, I do not think it is in the best interests of the people currently served by Santiam to no longer have local access to healthcare.

Reducing access to healthcare is a bad idea in my book. While this merger won't increase access it should guarantee the stability of access in that market.

Adam Morris

182. 7/17/26

Santiam Hospital and Clinics provide valuable services to the Santiam Canyon community. We can argue, question and dissect the information provided to OHA in response to the affiliation between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital, but the reality is we are talking about a valuable service to the residents of Santiam Canyon and the long-term viability of the Santiam Hospital. The proposed affiliation with Salem Health, a financial stable partner, will provide the necessary investments and long-term

financial stability that Santiam Hospital needs to continue the outstanding service to the residents of Santiam Canyon.

Tom Ruddiman

183. 7/17/26

I have been an employee with Santiam for 23 years. It is critical that we are allowed to affiliate with Salem Health in order to continue providing care to the Santiam Canyon residents from Idanha to Aumsville. We need the EMR support, the financial backing to continue to move forward with building our infrastructure to expand services.

Without this affiliation, the EMR purchase alone would be crippling financially to us. We simply do not have the cash reserves to move forward, especially if we continue to break even and/or sustain losses for the rest of the year. I implore you to approve this request so that we can move forward and continue providing excellent care to our community. Regards

Shannon Waddle

184. 7/17/26

"My nursing career started 7 years ago when I was hired out of my clinical rotations at a small, private-owned clinic in Oregon. We took pride in our small-town clinic, and how well we took care of our community. When patients would present for visits, we did not have to stare at our computers during their visits. We knew the patients, their diagnoses, and even details about their daily lives- all by memory. After 6 years of service, my career there ended. I longed for a job that gave me the same feeling I had in that rural community. I landed into the lap of Santiam Hospital & Clinics where I immediately felt at home. Within one day of practicing as a nurse in this facility, I knew the mission and morals of this Hospital was exactly what I believe is the gold standard for patient care.

Coming into the job, I was already aware of the plan that Santiam had, to become in affiliate with Salem Health. Unfortunately, small clinics and Hospitals cannot survive standing alone anymore. The fluctuation of economic difficulties in healthcare has become challenging for so many reasons. Coming together with Salem Health would help our community in countless ways, but I am not writing a novel, so I will abbreviate the details. Having recourses to best serve our patients is, and always has been, the number one goal. Having two entities that come together and act as one would

increase our ability to complete billing, coding, compliance and quality measures at a faster and more accurate rate.

The cost of EMR systems alone is incredibly expensive and having shared technology with Salem Health would allow our organization to continue using medical record systems that allow us to take care of our patients.

My first job as a nurse, and my only job prior to working at Santiam came to an end after a buy-out. Most people would think this would burn me enough to dislike or even hate the idea of going through a similar change in my new job- but this is not true. My prideful small clinic was bought by a large corporation that is recognized globally. Changes were made so quickly, that it drove staff and patients to leave. Decisions about patient care were being made from employees that were not even in the same state as us. Patients became numbers and dollar signs, and the ultimate goal of patient care shifted into something that my colleagues and I felt was unsafe. The priorities changed to a degree that our jobs became unfamiliar to us. I used to come to work, excited and eager to take care of my patients- and this quickly turned into dreading the day-to-day changes that flipped our organization upside down.

So why am I in favor of Santiam and Salem Health joining teams? Well, that to me is simple. Oregon owned and operated organizations with the same goals and virtues in mind will allow us to continue to serve our patients with the best care while also paying our staff the wages they deserve. Our state has a good health system; a larger corporation or company take over, if this affiliation falls through, is what I imagine would be on the horizon. The autonomy of what Oregon health care looks like, is still in our hands and keeping our organizations ""local"" or owned within the state makes such a massive difference for us as health care workers and patients.

I hope and pray that OHA sees our standpoint and agrees that the patients are at the forefront of our mission and agrees to move forward with our motion.

Ally

185. 7/17/26

Santiam I a big part of this community we are the closest care facility for a lot of families that are in the countryside and not near big cities. I have only worked at this hospital for a month, but I love this Job and the company i work for and want it and need it to stay for my lively hood. This hospital has saved my life as a patient.

Everything it does for the community gives back and help people in need. This bonding of hospitals would help reach more people, give people and families better care. This would save so many people jobs and there lively hoods and also patients in getting care and having a nearby hospital to get to.

Makenna R Croser

186. 7/17/26

On behalf of the Dallas Area Chamber of Commerce, we respectfully urge the Oregon Health Authority to make a timely determination on Salem Health's emergency exemption request by August 1.

Access to quality healthcare is fundamental to the strength of our communities, workforce, and regional economy. Rural communities, including those in the Santiam Canyon and throughout our region, depend on reliable healthcare services to support residents, businesses, and visitors alike.

The emergency exemption process exists to address situations where healthcare services are at immediate risk and prompt action is necessary to protect consumers and preserve the viability of an essential healthcare provider. Based on the information presented, we believe these statutory criteria have been met.

Timely action by OHA will provide certainty for patients, healthcare professionals, employers, and the communities that rely on these critical services. We encourage OHA to issue its determination by August 1 to help preserve access to care and support the long-term health and vitality of our region.

Thank you for your consideration.

Tara Townley

187. 7/17/26

The needs for stability, accessibility, and availability for small town medical care in Marion County have never been greater than now. The merger of Salem Health and Santiam Health systems under the emergency declaration must be approved now. Quality of life will seriously be in danger without this medical care. There is simply no reason for not approving this merger. Approve today.

Daniel Clem

188. 7/17/26

I did clinicals at Salem hospital in the early 2000's and I have worked 27 years at Santiam. My experience at both hospitals has been great. I have worked in all departments of nursing at Santiam, and it has been very rewarding. I think this affiliation would benefit both.

Geneva Welke

189. 7/17/26

I think this is going to be greatly beneficial for both communities. Growth and progression are important, and in an area that has been seeing increased population, it's that much more important to make sure health care is easily accessible. I love the idea of partnering, though change is of course nerve racking; im confident that santiam and salem both have their patient's best interest in mind at the end of the day.

Kara Falconer

190. 7/17/26

I have been employed by Santiam Hospital and Clinics for the past 5+ years. Prior to that, I was an employee of Legacy Silverton Hospital and Clinics for 2 decades. I was there when they transitioned from Silverton Hospital into part of the Legacy Health System. I feel that I have a good understanding of what this affiliation means and somewhat of what I need to expect.

I am proud to be part of the team here at Santiam. I feel that we are a gem in this rural community and even though we employee people from all over this area, including Salem and beyond, our staff has a great affection for this community and for the people that we serve. There is a big sense of pride in the work that we do, so it has been very difficult to hear the negativity that this affiliation agreement has produced. This is not only about our lively hoods, but the patients that we care for daily.

I would love to see my employer thrive without needing an affiliation. However, I fully support an affiliation if it allows us to remain open—especially as many small hospitals have had to close—and continue providing the best possible care to the patients we care so deeply about. In today's healthcare environment, I believe it is unrealistic to expect a small community hospital to remain independent long term. We are fortunate

that our CEO and Board recognized this and worked to find a local partner before disruptions could negatively affect the services and care we provide.

I am hopeful that with Salem Health becoming our partner, they will have an understanding of why our community means so much. I do not believe that this would be the case with other potential organizations from a further distance.

I want the community to understand that this affiliation is truly for them. Staff may come and go, but having a healthcare system within the community that can care for generations of families is invaluable.

Janeen Spencer

191. 7/17/26

I am an employee of Santiam that support the merger between Santiam Hospital and Salem Health because it helps ensure continued access to quality healthcare in this community and surrounding communities as well that may have limited or no medical recourses otherwise. This merger will provide greater opportunities for Santiam to grow and continue serving these community for years to come.

Lisa Lafferty

192. 7/17/26

I have been an employee with Santiam going on 5 years. This place has been a blessing to the community, everyone up and around the canyon area, and outside areas. To have the merger not take place would be detrimental to all of the community where health services would not be available in an amount of time for emergencies, ER patients, and patients who come to see our physician for routine care, surgeries, acute care etc.. Santiam is also an establishment which employs over 800 people who truly care about our patients. All of us are a tight group of people who either know each other, or say hello in the halls. This would be devastating to all involved. Santiam has been a place which I can truly say I enjoy coming to work and feel like I have made difference. I have made some great friendships with employees and patients.

Jodi Priem

193. 7/17/26

I find it ironic that the OHA posted a statement that they ""did not want to see any Oregon hospitals close"" a while back, and now it seems as if they are dragging their feet when it comes to the alignment between Santiam Hospital and Salem Health which in the end could cause Santiam to close our doors. As an employee of Santiam, and someone who grew up in Stayton, it would be devastating to our community throughout the Santiam Canyon if the worst-case scenario were to take place. Not only is the hospital the largest employer in Stayton and a huge part of the economic system, but it is also counted on by all of the surrounding communities. I myself have had so many patients tell me that they come to us because they love the community feel of Santiam, and they would not want to go anywhere else.

I have seen many comments from people on social media who are clearly looking from the outside in and have no idea the lengths Maggie and our board have been going through to not only keep the hospital and clinics open and viable, but to grow with the community's needs and become stronger. Since I started working here 5 years ago, we have grown exponentially, our surgery department did more surgeries recently than it has ever done in the history of the hospital being open. Last year our hospital was the only one in the state that not only didn't lose money but also made a profit. With the way insurance companies are changing their reimbursements to hospitals every health system is struggling, including ours.

Joy O.

194. 7/17/26

My name is Josh Franke. I am the vice president of surgical services at Salem Health. I am also a resident in our rural community between Silverton and Stayton, where Santiam provides critical access to care to both my family and my neighbors and friends. I write this letter of support for this transaction from both a professional and personal perspective, now that it is proceeding through an emergency exemption before the Oregon Health Authority.

I have had the pleasure of serving our communities professionally at Salem Health for over 10 years and have seen firsthand the quality, compassion, and diligent pursuit of excellent patient care, delivered in a sustainable way, that is engrained in our culture.

Santiam's financial condition has deteriorated rapidly, turning what began as a long-term partnership into an urgent need. That urgency is compounded by a hard deadline:

Santiam must begin transitioning to a new electronic health record system this fall, and it lacks the resources to do that alone. Without an EHR, there is no hospital.

The people of the canyon are part of our community and deserve continued, local access to the care they depend on. Through this transaction, our community in the canyon and surrounding area will maintain access to high-quality care, close to home, for years to come. Without it, that access — and the hospital itself — is at serious risk.

I respectfully urge the Oregon Health Authority to approve this emergency exemption swiftly, and I thank the Health Care Market Oversight office for the opportunity to comment.

Thank you,

Josh Franke

195. 7/17/26

As an employee of Santiam Hospital, I have had the privilege of serving our patients, our neighbors and our community. I have seen firsthand the dedication, compassion, and resilience of the people who work here every day. Santiam Hospital is more than just a place of employment- it is a vital part of the community we all call home.

The possibility of our hospital becoming insolvent is deeply concerning. The impact would extend far beyond the walls of the hospital. Our community would lose access to essential healthcare services close to home, forcing many families to travel farther for emergency care, routine appointments and specialized treatment. For many of our most vulnerable residents, that added distance and uncertainty could have serious consequences.

The hardship would also be felt by our employees. Santiam Hospital supports hundreds of families who have dedicated themselves to caring for others. The loss of jobs or instability within the organization would create financial and emotional strain for staff members who have worked tirelessly through challenging times to ensure our community continues to receive quality care.

For these reasons, I support moving forward with a partnership with Salem Health. I believe this partnership offers an opportunity to strengthen the future of healthcare in our region while preserving local access to the services our community depends on. A collaborative approach can provide greater financial stability, expanded resources, and

continued investment in patient care while allowing Santiam Hospital to continue serving the people who rely on us. I believe a partnership with Salem Health represents the best opportunity to secure that future.

J Nunez

196. 7/17/26

As both an employee of Salem Health and a resident of the Canyon, I strongly support the partnership between Salem Health and Santiam Hospital and respectfully urge the Oregon Health Authority to make a timely decision that preserves access to care in our community.

I have personally experienced the consequences of living in a rural area with limited access to lifesaving medical services. During a medical emergency while pregnant, I had to wait for an available ambulance and then be transported two hours over a mountain pass during a snowstorm. Throughout that journey, I feared for both my life and my baby's. No parent in the Canyon should face that same uncertainty because local healthcare options disappear.

In addition to my personal experience, my professional work in community development has given me firsthand insight into the challenges vulnerable populations face when navigating complex systems and accessing essential services. Reliable, local healthcare is not a convenience, it is a necessity.

The Oregon Health Authority has the opportunity to preserve healthcare access for more than 60,000 residents in our rural community, and for many more who come to explore the beautiful region. Delaying or denying this partnership would increase barriers to care and diminish the quality, reliability, and availability of healthcare services in our region. I urge OHA to act promptly in support of this partnership and the communities that depend on it.

Tricia Frizzell

197. 7/17/26

As a current santiam hospital employee and former employee of salem hospital, I encourage the OHA to please approve the merger. The impact the santiam canyon will have if this doesn't get approved in a timely manner will be devastating not only for

employees but the patients we care for. We need this! The Santiam canyon needs this! We will not thrive without the help of Salem Health.

Lucy Hemenway

198. 7/17/26

Yeah I've got a message for you I'm 88 years old I'm second generation of Stayton and Mehama people. Donated to the Santiam Memorial Hospital and there's 2 generations of back behind me coming up real fast. I'm 88 years old and I'm too damned old to go drive to Salem for my health. And I need we need the hospital in Stayton and we don't need a bunch of bureaucrats that don't know their butt from 6 bits telling us what we need out here. We've got a lot of people in my situation who don't want to and is having a hard time driving to Salem. So get off to the dead center, OK the program and let's get on with the program for the people not you bureaucrats thanks for listening but I doubt if it does any good.

199. 7/18/26

I am writing as a community member of Stayton, OR and employee of Santiam Hospital. I moved to Oregon in 2017 after taking a job at Santiam Hospital. I bought a home in Stayton in 2019. During the pandemic Santiam Hospital served its community in many ways. We remained open and kept employees in jobs, we volunteered in community outreach and worked on the issues still looming with the canyon fire. Santiam is more than a hospital it is a part of our community. It employs a great many of us, it is always here to help.

As we keep losing rural health care options for underserved communities throughout the country. The loss of this hospital would create a larger strain for the surrounding hospitals and outpatient centers. It would also cause hardship for community members with transportation and financial obstacles. No matter what has happened with Santiam in the past our leadership has always focused on the community and it's employees. I say this with over 25 years of healthcare work in 3 other states. I decided to stay at this hospital due to it's work with the community and the people I work with and for everyday.

Thank you for your time,

Adrianne Gonzales

200. 7/19/26

I have worked for Santiam Hospital for 18 years. I love the community of Santiam Hospital. I really have loved working here; I have been in the same department all my time here and it really feels like family; even as people come and go. I don't want that to go away. We really need to have this hospital so that the surrounding communities have somewhere to go. So that people that have true real emergencies don't have to drive clear into town to get help. Santiam needs to stay open for years to come so that the family I have come to love can continue on.

Fawn Kroeker

201. 7/19/26

While i wish that Santiam could remain independent, the expectations and expenses of healthcare as a whole has outgrown our capacity to provide gold standard care to our community without a larger supporting group/system. This was the same case previously for many smaller hospitals around this region and has allowed these institutions to continue to serve their communities. I do not feel, as a community member but also as a physician at both Silverton and stayton, that this affiliation with Salem is of malicious nature but rather out of necessity and proximity - with a large shared patient base. Please consider these points in an urgent fashion so that we, the providers, may continue to care for our patients without undue disruption. Thank you.

Liska Havel

202. 7/19/26

Governor Tina Kotek

David Baden, Deputy Director, Oregon Health Authority

Kristina Narayan, Healthcare Advisor to Governor Tina Kotek

Dear Governor Kotek, David, and Kristina,

Thank you again for the thoughtful phone conversation last week regarding the Oregon Health Authority emergency review process for the proposed merger between Santiam Hospital and Salem Health. I appreciate the opportunity to share additional perspective and to continue this important discussion.

I am writing as a continuation of that conversation to emphasize the critical importance of timing and the operational realities facing Santiam Hospital and Clinics.

As you know, Salem Health and Santiam Hospital are seeking approval through the Health Care Market Oversight (HCMO) emergency review process. The reason this review is urgent is directly related to our electronic medical record (EMR) infrastructure. Santiam Hospital currently utilizes Epic through a third-party agreement with St. Charles Health System. That agreement is scheduled to sunset in June 2027.

Transitioning to a new Epic environment is a complex, highly coordinated process that requires approximately 12 months or more of preparation, workflow redesign, data migration, testing, training, and implementation. This is not simply a technology transition; it is a fundamental operational requirement for safe patient care, physician workflows, billing, communication, and connection with healthcare partners throughout Oregon.

To successfully transition from the St. Charles Epic environment to the Salem Health Epic environment, we need sufficient lead time. If OHA/HCMO approval is obtained by August 1, 2026, the anticipated timeline would include:

August 2026 – Approval and transition planning begins

- Finalize merger pathway and Epic transition governance structure
- Establish implementation teams between Santiam and Salem Health
- Begin detailed project planning and resource allocation

September–December 2026 – Workflow assessment and system design

- Review current Santiam clinical workflows, templates, and operational needs
- Map workflows to Salem Health Epic environment
- Begin data migration planning and technical integration work
- Identify training needs for physicians, nurses, and staff

January–March 2027 – Build, testing, and preparation

- Complete Epic configuration and workflow development

- Begin testing and quality assurance processes
- Prepare staff education and implementation plans

April–June 2027 – Final implementation preparation

- Complete end-user training
- Conduct final testing and transition readiness assessments
- Execute go-live preparation before the St. Charles Epic contract sunset

Without this lead time, Santiam Hospital and Clinics face significant risk of not having a fully functional electronic health record system when our current agreement ends in June 2027.

We are committed to doing our due diligence to identify the right partner for Santiam's future. We believe Salem Health is the strongest cultural and operational fit because it is a local, nonprofit healthcare system that shares our commitment to community-based care while providing the resources needed for long-term stability.

We have a solution. Our solution is partnership with Salem Health while preserving the culture, relationships, and community values that have defined Santiam Hospital for generations.

I also want to share my perspective as a physician who has practiced in this community for 25 years. I have cared for generations of families, raised my children here, and have been deeply involved in understanding the healthcare needs of our rural communities. As a physician, community member, and immediate past president of the Marion-Polk County Medical Society, I understand the importance of maintaining access to local healthcare.

The continued operation of Santiam Hospital and Clinics beyond June 2027 is of the utmost importance to me and to the thousands of patients and families we serve. Closure of Santiam Hospital would have profound consequences for our community.

We respectfully ask for your partnership in helping us move this emergency review forward in a timely manner. If there are concerns regarding the merger, we would appreciate the opportunity to better understand those concerns and provide any additional information needed to demonstrate why this partnership is in the best

interest of our patients and community. We are seeking bi-directional thoughtful conversations.

Thank you again for your time, consideration, and willingness to engage in this important conversation. We appreciate your commitment to protecting healthcare access throughout Oregon.

Sincerely,

Dr. Tanie Hotan, MD

Family Physician, Santiam Hospital and Clinics (25 years)

Immediate Past President, Marion-Polk County Medical Society

Community Physician and Advocate

203. 7/19/26

Please pass the emergency request. We need this healthcare option and employment opportunity in our area.

Thanks

Jake stout

204. 7/19/26

I am writing as both a registered nurse at Santiam Hospital and a member of this community. The potential closure of Santiam Hospital would have devastating consequences for the thousands of people who depend on it for emergency care, surgeries, labor and delivery, outpatient services, and countless other healthcare needs.

Every day, I see firsthand the dedication of the physicians, nurses, and staff who provide compassionate, high-quality care to our patients. For many families, Santiam Hospital is not just their closest hospital—it is their only realistic access to timely healthcare. Losing this hospital would mean significantly longer travel times during medical emergencies, delays in treatment, and increased strain on neighboring healthcare facilities.

Rural communities deserve access to safe, reliable healthcare just as much as those in larger cities. The closure of Santiam Hospital would not only affect patients but would also impact hundreds of healthcare workers, local businesses, and the overall health and economic stability of our region.

I urge decision-makers to carefully consider the far-reaching consequences of this potential closure and to pursue every possible solution to keep Santiam Hospital open. The health, safety, and future of our community depend on it.

Savannah Craycraft

205. 7/19/26

Dear Oregon Health Authority,

I am writing on behalf of Canyon Family Health, an independent clinic in Stayton, to express our strong support for the emergency exemption requested by Santiam Hospital.

Santiam Hospital provides essential healthcare services to the Santiam Canyon community. Our patients rely on the hospital for imaging, wound care, breast cancer treatment, maternity services, emergency care, and specialty referrals. If these local services are unavailable, patients will be forced to travel to Salem, which will likely cause many to forgo necessary care due to transportation, cost, and time constraints.

While the concerns regarding market competition and insurance network restrictions are understandable, the broader crisis facing rural healthcare requires immediate consideration. Merging with Salem Health will allow Santiam Hospital to avoid the closures currently affecting small and rural hospitals nationwide. Furthermore, the insurance dispute stems from unsustainable reimbursement rates that should be addressed directly by the Oregon Health Authority and the Oregon Division of Financial Regulation, rather than delaying the merger for public commentary. The risk of a complete hospital closure far outweighs the competitive concerns.

Delaying this merger will directly harm vulnerable and underserved populations, which is antithetical to the goals of the Oregon Health Authority. We believe the Oregon Health Authority can approve this merger while simultaneously addressing market competition and insurance network issues.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this urgent matter.

Best Regards,

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Maria Fife, DNP, FNP-C

Canyon Family Health

206. 7/20/26

I support Santiam Hospital joining Salem Health because healthcare today requires significant investments in technology, infrastructure, and clinical support that are increasingly difficult for small independent organizations to sustain on their own. Access to an integrated electronic health record such as Epic, along with the resources of a larger health system, can help improve coordination, efficiency, and patient care. Ultimately, this is not about technology for technology's sake. It is about giving caregivers the tools they need so they can focus on what matters most: providing excellent care to our community.

Jason Johnson

207. 7/20/26

Good Morning

My name is Brent Anderson and I have been lucky enough to live in the beautiful Santiam Canyon for 26 years. I maintain the acres I live on. Two years ago I missed the step getting off my tractor and fell. Nobody was home to help me. My cell phone was too far away in the house, but my truck keys were in my pocket. I got myself in my truck and drove to Santiam Hospital in Stayton. I could drive 5 miles, but I could not of driven all the way to Salem. I have heart conditions & have 3 stint's knowing Santiam Hospital is there for me if I need them is what allows me to live and stay in my home. If Santiam Hospital wasn't there for me I would need to leave my home. Also 2025 my son was working on my roof and fell off. My son was rushed to the hospital for possible internal injuries and they took excellent care of him, he had many injuries that he did overcome thanks to his Santiam Doctor & stellar nurses. The previous year my house painter was up on a tall ladder and he fell off. I called 911 and the Santiam EMTs arrived in 3 minutes! They're the BEST!

Sincerely

Brent Anderson

208. 7/20/26

Yes I think Santiam hospital has done us a great job just the way it is. I don't think it needs to go into this new program. I think they should just stay that way they are period. What? You want them to go to together? I said they should just stay the way they are. Yeah.

Oh they should go with united healthcare.

They should go with united healthcare. That's what we have and it's been wonderful being with them thank you bye.

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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