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January 12, 2022

The Honorable Dan Kalb  
Oakland City Council, District 1  
City Hall  
1 Frank Ogawa Plaza, 2nd Floor  
Oakland, California 94612

RE: **Consent Calendar (CC) Item: 2.16** - Oakland City Council, January 18th  
RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF HIGH QUALITY, EQUITABLE HEALTH CARE SERVICES AT  
UCSF CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OAKLAND

Dear Councilmember Kalb,

Thank you for sharing the draft of this resolution and the opportunity to provide feedback.

We sincerely appreciate your ongoing support of UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital (BCH) Oakland. Today, we write to you, respectfully and with concern, that the claims in this resolution are factually wrong. We do understand that these claims were provided to you by third parties. For your consideration, we have [linked here, and have attached as appendix A below, information that lays out the facts and their supporting data.](#)

The claims in the draft resolution state that the affiliation between Children's Hospital Oakland and UCSF in 2014 has resulted in reduced "critical services" and "the transfer of financial resources" from BCH Oakland to BCH San Francisco. The fundamental misconception in these claims is the assumption that BCH Oakland and BCH San Francisco operate independently from one another.

The fact is that BCH Oakland and BCH San Francisco operate as part of a single, integrated pediatric health system. As such, UCSF seeks to ensure the success and financial health of the integrated system and, thus, both hospitals. It defies common sense to claim that actions are being taken to enrich BCH San Francisco at the cost of BCH Oakland, as this would equate to robbing one hand to pay the other.

There is no financial incentive to transfer patients from one campus to the other. We send patients from one hospital campus to the other only when the specific care a patient needs is best offered in another location, and always with the family's permission. We serve our local communities with a broad array of critical services in both locations. But each hospital campus has its unique strengths—which avoids redundancies—and this complementary approach offers our patients a broader range of critical services than either hospital campus could provide on its own.

The affiliation brought together two great health care organizations united in the mission to serve all children regardless of their ability to pay, but understanding why the affiliation was formed is important. Children’s Hospital Oakland was on the brink of bankruptcy prior to the affiliation. Its operating model was not sustainable, similar to other community hospitals that were closing due to operating and financial challenges, as Doctors Medical Center in San Pablo did in 2015. After Stanford Health System walked away from a potential affiliation, Children’s Hospital Oakland had few options. The affiliation with UCSF allowed the hospital to join a health system with the necessary scale and resources to survive and grow in a changing competitive environment while continuing to serve the community.

As we continue to strengthen and invest in UCSF BCH Oakland, we appreciate that reasonable people will have different opinions about how to grow and modernize the Oakland hospital campus. However, it is disappointing that we must once again correct false claims, especially when our care quality has been [objectively recognized for its excellence nationally—rising in all ranked categories—by US News & World Report this past year.](#)

There are real consequences that stem from the actions of the parties that provided you this inaccurate information. UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital Oakland offers critical pediatric services not offered by other providers, and these false claims have the potential to dissuade patients from seeking the care we provide. Again, we sincerely appreciate the opportunity to respond to these claims, and we ask for your consideration in distinguishing fact from fiction.

Sincerely,



Matthew Cook (he, him, his)  
President  
UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospitals

Cc: Hon. Rebecca Kaplan, Council Member At Large  
Hon. Nikki Fortunato Bas, Council President, District 2  
Hon. Carroll Fife, Councilmember, District 3  
Hon. Sheng Thao, Council president Pro Tempore, District 4  
Hon. Noel Gallo, Councilmember, District 5  
Hon. Loren Taylor, Councilmember, District 6  
Hon. Treva Reid, Councilmember, District 7

## APPENDIX A

FROM THE WEBSITE:

[HTTPS://WWW.UCSFBENIOFFCHILDRENS.ORG/NEWS/SETTING-THE-RECORD-STRAIGHT-UCSF-OAKLAND](https://www.ucsfbenioffchildrens.org/news/setting-the-record-straight-ucsf-oakland)

PUBLISHED DECEMBER 2021

To establish the Benioff Children's Hospitals in Oakland and San Francisco as the preeminent network for pediatric care, we need the contributions of our entire BCH community. In the interest of reinforcing our shared focus on the health care needs of our patients and their families, the information below seeks to help set the record straight on some rumors that are raising questions and leading to misunderstandings.

### Strengthening BCH Oakland's financial health

Rumor	Fact
The affiliation is harming BCH Oakland's financial health.	<p>The opposite is actually true. The affiliation rescued BCH Oakland after years of being financially vulnerable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Since 2014, UCSF's direct contributions have resulted in more than \$181M for BCH Oakland's care of pediatric Medi-Cal patients in Alameda County.</li><li>• The affiliation brought in more than \$200 million in philanthropy for building programs and supporting operations for Oakland.</li><li>• Because of UCSF's support, BCH Oakland has been able to survive financially during the COVID pandemic.</li></ul>

## Expanding children's health services and programs

Rumor	Fact
<p>The affiliation has reduced children's services in Oakland.</p>	<p>This rumor gets it wrong. In fact, the affiliation has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Enabled Oakland's Pediatric Trauma Center to remain in Oakland, when more than 40 California hospitals have closed their emergency departments.</li><li>• Expanded BCH Oakland's specialty programs – such as physical rehabilitation – and upgraded services that were unavailable or had declined.</li><li>• Recruited new doctors in neurology, neurosurgery and gastroenterology.</li><li>• Rebuilt Oakland's cardiology program, with a larger cardiac team and more heart surgery services.</li><li>• Added new programs in dermatology, rheumatology, gender identity, headache, sports medicine, concussions and Down Syndrome.</li><li>• Set up new Oakland physician practices in orthopedics, ear/nose/throat and pulmonology.</li><li>• Expanded mental health care for children, enrolling 42 pediatric practices in its psychiatry telehealth program so far, covering more than 200,000 children.</li><li>• Added 220 community physicians to its primary care pediatrician network, reaching 56 locations in 24 cities.</li></ul>
<p>Oakland's patients are being sent to San Francisco, reducing the options for low-income patients in Oakland.</p>	<p>This misleading statement provides a false and incomplete picture of how a single pediatric health system with two campuses operates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Our physicians send patients to both locations to provide the specific care their patients need.</li></ul>

- For example, the Oakland campus is our primary center of excellence for sickle cell care. Both Oakland and San Francisco have sickle cell programs; patients are sent from San Francisco when our physicians determine these patients will be served better in Oakland.
- Oakland is also where we send patients who need services such as trauma care, inpatient pediatric rehabilitation, robotic exoskeleton-based rehabilitation from spinal cord injury, and infusion services for the genetic metabolic disease mucopolysaccharidosis.
- Children receive care in either hospital, based on medical needs – not insurance coverage. UCSF has financial responsibility for both hospitals, so there is no financial incentive to move children from Oakland.

### Investing in Oakland facilities and resources

Rumor	Fact
<p>The affiliation is taking resources out of Oakland and sending them to San Francisco.</p>	<p>The millions of dollars in investment made in Oakland since the affiliation show that this claim is simply false.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We continue to invest in Oakland facilities to help ensure its status as a world-class safety net hospital and Level One Pediatric Trauma Center for years to come.</li> <li>• More than \$200M in investments in Oakland facilities have already been made, and the goal is to complete another \$120M in projects by the end of 2022, focused on seismic upgrades and modernizing our acute care services.</li> <li>• This includes \$90 million in philanthropy to support the new BCH Oakland outpatient clinic – a state-of-the-art facility that expanded outpatient care by 40%.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We expect to start phase 2 soon of the Oakland expansion soon, launching an estimated \$1 billion, 10-year initiative that will include a new patient pavilion.</li> <li>• The affiliation allowed BCH Oakland to access \$50 million in bond funds to improve its intensive care units, inpatient areas and seismic safety.</li> <li>• The investment in Oakland's Electronic Health Record system has helped the hospital reduce costs, improve efficiency and provide better care for patients.</li> </ul>
<p>The Sickle Cell program in Oakland has been diminished.</p>	<p>In fact, Oakland's Sickle Cell Disease Center is expanding care and research into new therapies to treat this debilitating condition.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland just received a \$17 million grant, the largest for a research trial in Oakland's history</a>, to launch an innovative clinical trial aimed at curing sickle cell disease. The grant is part of a UC consortium including UCSF, UCLA and UC Berkeley.</li> <li>• Benioff Children's Hospitals President Matt Cook committed to an additional \$1 million investment in the Oakland Sickle Cell Program.</li> <li>• Outpatient pediatric volume has increased by 12.5% over the past year – a good development for helping sickle cell patients manage the condition through outpatient visits over inpatient stays.</li> <li>• The Oakland program has been recognized by the American Society of Hematology as being among the top six sickle cell clinical trial programs in the country.</li> <li>• UCSF Chancellor Sam Hawgood <a href="#">spotlighted the Oakland program as an important priority</a> in his 2021 State of the University Address.</li> </ul>

**Strengthening health equity as a key priority**

<b>Rumor</b>	<b>Fact</b>
<p>The affiliation has hurt vulnerable children in the Oakland community.</p>	<p>Serving the most vulnerable is at the center of our mission. It guides everything we do.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nearly 70% of BCH Oakland's patients receive care under Medi-Cal. No child is turned away due to a family's inability to pay.</li><li>• We are strengthening programs that matter most to our Oakland community, such as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) research. Since the affiliation, Oakland's expertise in ACEs has led to a screening tool that is now used in children's clinics statewide.</li></ul>

## APPENDIX B

From the website <https://www.ucsf.edu/news/2021/06/420811/ucsf-benioff-childrens-hospitals-rank-among-nations-best-2021-2022-us-news>

### UCSF Benioff Children's Hospitals Rank Among the Nation's Best in 2021-2022 US News & World Report

Hospitals Receive Top Ranking for Children's Cancer Care in Northern California and Place Nationwide for All 10 Specialties Surveyed

UCSF Benioff Children's Hospitals have been recognized among the nation's best pediatric medical centers in all 10 specialties assessed in *U.S. News & World Report's* annual survey of Best Children's Hospitals for 2021-2022, reflecting the quality of specialty care the hospitals provide for children in Northern California and beyond.

Together, [UCSF Benioff Children's Hospitals](#) in Oakland and San Francisco ranked fourth nationwide in newborn specialty care (neonatology) and were the top-ranked children's hospitals in Northern California in both pediatric cancer and urology. They also placed among the top 20 children's hospitals nationwide in diabetes and endocrinology, kidney care (nephrology), and neurology and neurosurgery, and received high marks in four other pediatric specialties: cardiology and heart surgery, pulmonology, gastroenterology and GI surgery, and orthopedics. Overall, they tied as the No. 3 children's hospitals in the entire Pacific Region, which includes Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon and Washington.

"Over the past year, our teams have risen to a new challenge in serving the children of our communities. Their efforts have been tremendous, and we are so proud that they have been recognized once again for the excellence they provide every day," said [Mark R. Laret](#), president and chief executive officer of UCSF Health. "The rise in rankings across the board this year reflects the benefits of an affiliation that has brought together two world-class institutions with a long history of excellence, as well as an unwavering dedication to the details of our work."

The annual *U.S. News* rankings serve as a guide to hospitals nationwide that excel in treating children with the most challenging diagnoses. This is the sixth year in which UCSF Benioff Children's Hospitals have ranked together among the best children's hospitals across all 10 rankings. This year, the hospitals' rankings rose in almost every category.

"We have a long-term vision to be one of the greatest children's health enterprises in the nation, alongside an unwavering commitment to serving the most vulnerable children and families in our community," said Matthew Cook, MBA, president of UCSF Benioff Children's Hospitals. "This is welcome recognition of our commitment and our investment in the specialty care we provide, as well as the entire team's efforts on behalf of the children we serve."

The 2021-22 results represent the 15th year of pediatric rankings. The methodology reflects clinical outcomes such as patient survival, infection rates and complications; the level and quality of hospital resources directly related to patient care, including staffing, special services and technology; delivery of health care, such as programs to prevent infection and promote adherence to best practices; and expert opinion from surveys of 5,858 pediatric specialists.



Of the 193 children’s hospitals reviewed this year, 89 hospitals were ranked among the top 50 in at least one specialty. Each facility was either a freestanding children’s hospital or an autonomous, multidisciplinary pediatric department within a major medical center.

### UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospitals Specialty Rankings for 2021-2022



A staff member walks with a young patient through the Pediatric Oncology unit at UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital Oakland. *Photo by Maurice Ramirez*

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|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>#4</b> Neonatology                 | <b>#19</b> Nephrology                      |
| <b>#12</b> Neurology and Neurosurgery | <b>#27</b> Cardiology and Heart Surgery    |
| <b>#14</b> Cancer Care                | <b>#29</b> Pulmonology                     |
| <b>#15</b> Urology                    | <b>#30</b> Gastroenterology and GI Surgery |
| <b>#17</b> Diabetes and Endocrinology | <b>#50</b> Orthopedics                     |