

Wood introduces bill on hospital seismic safety compliance for small rural and district hospitals

March 4, 2023



Assemblymember Jim Wood (D-Healdsburg) has introduced AB 869, which would protect patient access to small rural and district hospitals in danger of closing due to seismic safety compliance requirements.

Earthquakes are endemic to California. Existing law establishes timelines for hospital compliance with seismic safety standards requiring retrofitting or rebuilding hospitals to withstand earthquakes and remain operable or be removed from acute care service by January 1, 2030.

“These hospitals are literally lifelines to Californians in our more rural communities and most do not have the financial resources nor the ability to acquire funding from other sources to meet seismic requirements,” said Wood. “There has to be a way to move forward to keep these hospitals open as they work to meet these standards.”

Existing law established the Small and Rural Hospital Relief Program administered by the Department of Health Care Access and Administration (HCAI), which provides grants to small and rural hospitals to assist

planning efforts to meet seismic requirements.

AB 869 will require HCAI to provide grant funding, when appropriated by the Legislature, to financially distressed small rural and district hospitals in order to meet these seismic requirements and would provide the ability to delay the requirement. When funds are not available for small rural hospitals and estimated seismic costs exceed the larger of \$1 million or 2 percent of hospital revenue, the hospital will not be required to meet the 2030 requirements until funds are available. In addition, financially distressed district hospitals more than 30 minutes or 30 miles from the nearest hospital would also not be required to comply with 2030 requirements until funds are available.

“The hospitals covered by this legislation are often the only hospital in the county with the next hospital many miles away and any closure would jeopardize the health of the community and its ability to respond to emergency situations and just cannot be allowed to happen,” said Wood.