



July 22, 2024

To: The Oregon Health Care Market Oversight Staff,

The Bend Chamber of Commerce strongly supports a potential transaction by The Center and St. Charles Health System to expand their relationship. These organizations recently submitted an emergency exemption request to the Oregon Health Authority's Material Transaction Review process that we urge you to approve.

The Bend Chamber represents 1,700 businesses that know first-hand, the needs of our growing Central Oregon community. We hear regularly from business leaders, employers, and employees that access to healthcare services and the availability of orthopedic and neurosurgical care is a growing concern.

This has even greater impact on communities such as ours that are outside the Willamette Valley, with fewer options for specialty care. The clinics in Central Oregon also serve the majority of Eastern Oregon as a health care hub for the region.

Many independent providers are closing their doors due to high overhead costs and reimbursement for services that do not match the inflation in wages, equipment costs, and drug prices, to name a few. We are incredibly grateful that our local, nonprofit health system – St. Charles – has recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic and is in strong enough shape to help stabilize and support orthopedic and neurosurgical care in our region.

Given the difficulties independent medical practices face today, we believe it is in the best interest of those who live in Central Oregon for The Center and St. Charles to complete their potential transaction as soon as possible. We have full confidence that St. Charles and The Center providers have the best interest of our collective community at heart and will work together to ensure no disruption in care. We believe this transaction will improve access to care for our region as a whole.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to reach out.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Katy Brooks". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Katy Brooks
President/CEO
Bend Chamber of Commerce

Cc:
Representative Jason Kropf
Representative Emerson Levy
Senator Tim Knopp