



City of Covington

16720 SE 271st Street, Suite 100 • Covington, WA 98042 • (253) 638-1110 • Fax: (253) 638-1122

BY U.S. MAIL AND ELECTRONIC MAIL

March 2, 2011

Senator Joe Fain
109B Irv Newhouse Building
PO Box 40447
Olympia, WA 98504-0447

Senator Cheryl Pflug
415 Legislative Building
P.O. Box 40405
Olympia WA 98504-0405

RE: City of Covington Opposition to Moratorium in SSB 5515, "Providing Requirements for Freestanding Emergency Rooms"

Dear Senators Fain and Pflug:

The City of Covington strongly opposes the moratorium on new freestanding emergency rooms in Section 3 of Substitute Senate Bill 5515, "Providing Requirements for Freestanding Emergency Rooms."

MultiCare Health System is in the city's permit process to construct a freestanding emergency room, and Valley Medical Center is about to enter the city's process. In addition, MultiCare recently received a certificate of need from the state Department of Health to construct a 58-bed hospital in our city.

Covington residents currently lack access to adequate integrated healthcare and emergency medical services, a fact documented during the certificate of need process. In addition, Covington's Comprehensive Plan identifies the healthcare sector as a key partner in our efforts to create a healthy economy and vibrant downtown.

The city recognizes that freestanding emergency rooms are a relatively new concept in Washington and therefore a conversation about the role they should play in our state's healthcare system is probably in order. However, a moratorium on freestanding emergency rooms while that conversation takes place is unduly burdensome on our city. It would stop the

two pending freestanding emergency room projects, negatively impact the hospital project, ensure a continued shortage of access to needed healthcare services, and cost our city hundreds of high- and family-wage jobs and countless additional economic development opportunities.

We respectfully request the Senate delete the moratorium provision or reword it to exempt pending freestanding emergency rooms.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Harto". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

COVINGTON CITY COUNCIL

Margaret Harto
Mayor

cc: 47th and 5th District Representatives
Covington City Council
Covington Management Team
Dick Little, Contract lobbyist
Hugh Kodama, Administrator, MultiCare Covington Clinic
Rich Roodman, Superintendent, Valley Medical Center