**DRAFT**

July\_\_\_, 2022

Mr. Michael Bowman

Anthem Blue Cross

**Subject: Continuing Coverage for the Mendocino Coast**

Dear Mr. Bowman,

The Mendocino Coast Health Care District owns a hospital and clinic located in Fort Bragg which is situated in the remote Mendocino Coast in Northern CA. It is governed by a five-member Board elected by the voters who reside in the District which stretches for 75 miles along the Pacific Coast. Our affiliation partner, Adventist Health Network, operates the hospital, the clinic, home health and ambulance services.

The Board of Directors is aware that negotiations between Anthem and Adventist Health, currently at an impasse, may not be successful. The result would be that for thousands of people in our economically disadvantaged and rural community, the nearest hospitals accepting Anthem Blue Cross are a drive of 1 hour and 45 minutes (Garberville) or 2 hours and 45 minutes (Novato) during daylight and in good weather. This is unimaginable hardship for our community which has been designated a Severely Disadvantaged Community per the American Community Survey

The loss of access to the hospital and clinic in Fort Bragg will result in poorer and more expensive health outcomes in the long run. We anticipate further that people, instead of driving long distances, will overload the Emergency Room instead. The likely increase in unpaid bills would endanger the already fragile economics of the hospital and push it closer to failure, as would the further erosion of patients with private insurance.

We are hopeful that the negotiations with the Adventist Health network will be successfully concluded and these concerns will not materialize. However, in the event they are not, the Board of Directors would like to immediately begin talks with Anthem for the purpose of creating a one-year exception for our remote community, recognizing that our circumstances differ significantly from other hospitals and clinics in the Adventist Health Network.

Best Regards,