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**Contact:** Frank Brabec  
fbrabec@ivcshf.org

### **New Coalition launches website, seeks amendments to AB918 to ensure strong, sustainable and equitable healthcare infrastructure for Imperial Valley**

(Brawley, CA) – Following passage last year of AB918, a bill designed to create a brand new, unfunded healthcare district in Imperial Valley, concerned community members have formed a new coalition to ensure that any changes to the existing healthcare infrastructure meet the needs of Imperial’s diverse and growing population now and in to the future.

“Our coalition’s goal is to ensure that our diverse and growing population has a sustainable healthcare infrastructure that serves all residents’ needs. We want a strong and equitable system for the entire county,” said Frank Brabec, President of the [Imperial Valley Coalition for Sustainable Healthcare Facilities \(IVCSHF\)](https://www.ivcshf.org/).

“When AB918 was introduced last year to create a whole new healthcare district many of us expressed our concerns to our elected leaders. The lack of complete data, the timetable to dissolve existing districts and an unidentified source of funding were chief among these concerns. We believe that a Community Needs Assessment must inform changes and should have been done before the bill was passed. But now that the AB918 is the law, our concerns have only grown and more issues have arisen that make it critical for our communities that AB918 be amended,” said Brabec.

#### **COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

The Coalition is currently supporting the efforts of the Imperial Valley Public Health Department and Health Management Associates who are conducting a Community Needs Assessment.

“The Community Needs Assessment” is a very good first step and we applaud the County for putting the resources towards understanding issues impacting quality of life. That is what we seek – information. The only way to make responsible determinations about the future of our healthcare infrastructure is to gather and analyze information we currently lack.”

Coalition members encourage the public to respond to the questionnaire found through the Department’s website before the February 5 deadline:

[https://healthmanagement.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_3KRxW7DBKepZtNs](https://healthmanagement.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3KRxW7DBKepZtNs)

#### **AMENDMENTS TO AB918**

Ideally, the Needs Assessment would be completed and presented to the public before implementing AB918. As that is not possible under the current version of the law, the Coalition has developed specific recommendations to amend the new law and has requested its original author

Assembly Member Eduardo Garcia introduce a bill before the February 16<sup>th</sup> legislative deadline. In addition to having provided the requested amendments to ASM Garcia, the Coalition has posted to its website and provided copies to local leaders and stakeholders including the Board of Supervisors, Senator Steve Padilla and the leadership of Pioneers Memorial Hospital and El Centro Regional Medical Center.

### **DATA MISSING FROM FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY STUDY**

As enacted, AB918 several times cites a Kaufman Hall economic feasibility study as a source for the newly created district board to make recommendations on a funding source for the new district. However, to date, that study has not been made public, nor has it been shared with any of the direct stakeholders, including the members of the new Initial Board of the IVHD. In response to a recent Public Records Act request from the Coalition, the El Centro Regional Medical Center said the Kaufman Hall study “is not a public document” despite it being mentioned in several paragraphs in the new law.

AB918 directs the new IVHD Board to utilize financial feasibility studies from BAE commissioned by the Imperial Valley Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) as well as the Kaufman Hall study. Coalition member John Grass [previously wrote about data missing from the BAE study](#), but more troubling is that the Kaufman Hall hasn’t seen daylight.

“Clearly certain stakeholders involved in negotiations with the bill’s author represented that this information and findings would be imminent and ASM Garcia seemingly relied on that information since he included it as one of the two components for deliberations of the new Board. Even with such a study, and as evidenced with the Mr. Grass’ evaluation of the BAE study, there simply and clearly is not enough information available and being shared to make reasonable and responsible decisions on how to achieve the intent of AB918. Moreover it is entirely premature and unacceptably risky to start the clock on dissolving one working healthcare district when there is no guarantee that voters would approve a new funding source for a new healthcare district and there is no back-up plan should that ballot measure fail.

“Whether a single healthcare district can achieve the efficiencies sought under AB918 is an open question; or whether it’s in the best interest of our entire community. That can only be determined by a transparent process with a full and complete understanding of the community’s needs and the financial health of the existing hospitals serving Imperial Valley residents,” Brabec concluded.

For more information about the Coalition and to get involved, please visit [IVCSHF.org](http://IVCSHF.org).

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