

February 20, 2014

2013-116

The Governor of California  
President pro Tempore of the Senate  
Speaker of the Assembly  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Governor and Legislative Leaders:

As requested by the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, the California State Auditor presents this audit report concerning Los Angeles County's (Los Angeles) management of Measure B funds. Measure B was approved by voters in November 2002 to maintain and expand Los Angeles's trauma system, ensure the continued availability of emergency medical services, and respond effectively to biological terrorism. The Board of Supervisors for the County of Los Angeles (board) allocates these funds primarily to reimburse the 14 trauma centers—two county-operated and 12 non-county-operated trauma centers—within Los Angeles's trauma system for treatment of patients who are unable to pay for their care and who have no third-party insurance coverage.

This report concludes that without a comprehensive assessment of its trauma system, Los Angeles cannot demonstrate that it has used Measure B funds to address the most pressing trauma needs and has fulfilled the intent of the measure by expanding trauma services countywide. Since voters approved the measure in 2002, existing trauma centers remain far removed from some geographical areas of the county (underserved areas), requiring Los Angeles to use helicopters to transport some trauma patients from those areas, including East San Gabriel Valley. Although Los Angeles's Emergency Medical Services Agency (EMS)—the county entity responsible for overseeing the trauma system—conducts periodic performance evaluations of individual trauma centers, it has not conducted a comprehensive assessment that would allow it to demonstrate whether its trauma system is meeting the needs of all areas and populations in the county. Additionally, the board has not reassessed its approach to allocating Measure B funds in roughly a decade, hindering its ability to demonstrate that it has fulfilled the intent of the measure, which, according to board documents, includes assisting hospitals in underserved areas become trauma centers. After voters approved Measure B, the board established a Measure B Oversight Committee (oversight committee), which has since disbanded. We believe that reinstating the oversight committee could provide the board with a key advisory body to review its allocation approach.

Further, although the board initially funded helicopter transport of trauma patients from underserved areas as an interim solution to establishing trauma centers in these areas, it has apparently adopted this as a permanent solution. As a result, we expected EMS to have monitored, assessed, and reported consistently on the adequacy and effectiveness of these helicopter transport services; however, we found that it has not done so. Lastly, shortly after the passage of Measure B, Los Angeles undertook some formalized efforts to designate a hospital as a trauma center in East San Gabriel Valley. Since that time, Los Angeles has made only minimal attempts to do so and if it does not increase and formalize its efforts, it may miss the opportunity to designate a trauma center in this underserved area.

Respectfully submitted,



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State Auditor