

# IMMUNIZE LA Kids

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Supervisor, District #  
County of Los Angeles  
Address  
City, State, Zip

Re: Proposed Closure of the Martin Luther King, Jr./Charles R. Drew Medical Center  
Trauma Center

Dear Supervisor X:

Immunize LA Kids is a coalition of community based organizations, health care providers, concerned citizens and others who work to improve the immunization rates in the South Los Angeles area. We also advocate for issues deemed relevant to the overall health of the community's residents. It is in this regard that we go on record as opposing the proposed closure of the trauma center at Martin Luther King, Jr./Charles R. Drew Medical Center as given unanimous initial endorsement by vote of the LA County Board of Supervisors. Our opposition has been approved by consensus of the Steering Committee, and endorsed by the coalition as a whole of Immunize LA Kids. Our reasons for opposing the proposed closure are as follows:

1. **Unnecessary suffering and death will result:** Trauma by definition refers to serious, life-threatening injury, where survival is time dependent. In 2002, King/Drew Medical Center treated 2,150 trauma cases, 75% of them penetrating injuries, primarily gunshot wounds. The extra time needed to transport trauma victims to the trauma units identified to cover those treated at King/Drew Medical Center is anywhere from 11 to 30 minutes. This time lost adds up to a measurable number of lives lost. This decision has an impact on those living in the local community as well as anyone requiring the services of the trauma center, in the event of a catastrophic injury. In a recent Los Angeles Times article, Dr. Brian Hubbard, a trauma surgeon, stated that "people will be dying in the streets or dying in transport to other facilities".
2. **Problems with the trauma center were not identified by the Board of Supervisors as a reason for closure:** The stated reason given to justify the closure was to reduce the pressure on hospital services as a whole; with less trauma patients the hospital could concentrate on other areas. There is no evidence this would in any way correct the accepted problems at the institution. It was further stated that this was a matter of resources. If it is a matter of resources (which have in fact been promised to the other institutions that will take the King/Drew trauma

patients), the County could increase the resources (i.e. monies) dedicated to King/Drew Medical Center to allow them to better manage these critical patients.

- 3. The countywide trauma network will be pushed closer to collapse:** There is a need for a certain number of trauma centers in the county to manage the trauma injuries that occur. These centers are set up as a network. LA County has lost 10 trauma centers in the past two decades. Presently, there are 13. With the closure of additional trauma centers this network moves closer to collapse, jeopardizing all trauma victims in LA County. The diversion of King/Drew trauma cases are planned to go to two other hospitals: St. Francis Hospital, where the trauma unit director has gone on record as not capable of managing more trauma cases, and Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, which is 10 to 15 minutes away (excluding traffic), precious time in an emergency. California Hospital Medical Center, another alternative mentioned, does not at this time even have a trauma center. The excess stress on the trauma system could precipitate the closure of other trauma centers that provide these services on a voluntary basis, leading to a total collapse of the system.

Thus, Immunize LA Kids opposes the proposed closure of the trauma center at Martin Luther King, Jr./Charles R. Drew Medical Center.

Signed on behalf of Immunize LA Kids Coalition,

Oliver T. Brooks, M.D.  
Chairman,  
Immunize LA Kids

Note: The above position was approved by consensus of the leadership of the Coalition and endorsed by the body as a whole. It does not necessarily represent the opinion of any individual member of the Coalition or its Steering Committee.