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August 29, 2007

The Honorable Michael O. Leavitt
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Leavitt:

I know that you share my commitment to expanding access to health care for medically-underserved rural communities. I therefore write to request that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) immediately conduct the initial survey and accreditation as soon as Pikes Peak Regional Hospital is qualified. This facility will provide critical care to rural, medically-underserved communities in central Colorado when it opens in October, 2007.

Because of the lack of access to health care, for the past eight years the residents and businesses of central Colorado have diligently worked to build the Pikes Peak Regional Hospital. In October, 2007, the hospital, which is independently financed and community-owned, will open its doors and function as one of the only providers of emergency services and assisted living care in Teller, Park, western El Paso and southern Douglas counties. In addition, the hospital will provide laboratory, radiology and surgical care to thousands of rural residents, who would otherwise go without these services or travel great distances to access these services in urban towns and communities. The hospital and campus will also foster economic growth and development by employing over 130 physicians, nurses, and employees and will infuse \$16M annually into the economy of central Colorado.

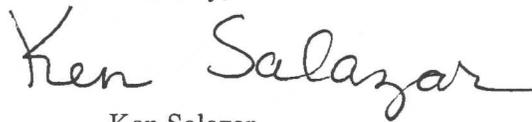
Unfortunately, the hospital's opening and future survival is jeopardized by a CMS policy that prioritizes the accreditation of new medical facilities behind existing hospitals. The regional CMS office informed the hospital that it will take at least 6-8 months before CMS will commence its survey and accreditation procedures to enable the hospital to obtain its certification to accept Medicare patients. Because the Medicare certification is required in order for the hospital to serve Medicare beneficiaries and individuals insured by private insurers, the hospital cannot function economically without the certification. In addition, the hospital cannot support the requirements of physicians and medical providers, who are scheduled to begin their practice in October, without the certification. Any delay in the opening of the hospital will cause it to lose millions of dollars in lost revenue and debt service costs, ultimately jeopardizing its long-term sustainability. In

addition, opening delays will deny community residents, who have worked tirelessly to finance and build the hospital, with access to critical health care.

While I understand the workload and time constraints faced by CMS, given the critical medical role that the hospital will serve, and the financial consequences of the delay, I request that CMS immediately commence the certification and accreditation procedures for the hospital. I am sure that you will agree that the medical needs of the rural residents of Teller, Park, western El Paso and southern Douglas counties justify making the survey and accreditation of the hospital a top priority as soon as it is qualified. Moreover, given the hard work and dedication of the people and businesses of these communities in financing and building the hospital, it would be a tragedy if the hospital was unable to open in October or ultimately survive as a result of a bureaucratic delay on the part of CMS.

Given the emergent nature of this issue, I look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible regarding this important matter. Please have your staff contact my health care counselor, Karen Howard at 202.228.5435 to discuss expediting this matter to ensure that CMS commences the survey and accreditation of the Pikes Peak Regional Hospital in sufficient time to enable it to open with the necessary certifications in October, 2007.

Sincerely,

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

Ken Salazar

Cc: Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services