DATE: May 12, 2020
TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Paul E. Lorenz, Chief Executive Officer, SCVMC
SUBJECT: Extension of Hours Limitation for Extra Help Clinical and Support Services Staff

RECOMMENDED ACTION
Approve extension of extra-help hours beyond the current 1,040-hours limitation for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2019-2020 for 55 clinical and support services staff for VMC at Bascom, VMC-O'Connor, and VMC-Saint Louise.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS
Approval of the recommended action will not require modification to the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Adopted Budget for Santa Clara Valley Medical Center Hospitals and Clinics (SCVMC). SCVMC’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic will require increased use of labor, including greater use of overtime and extra-help, part-time employees working over code, and salaried employees working longer hours. It is expected that some of this additional cost will be reimbursed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and SCVMC will bring forward a budget modification to increase the appropriation for payroll prior to the end of the fiscal year.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION
Pursuant to Merit System Rule A25-188(e), no person may receive pay in an extra-help capacity in the same classification in the same department for more than 1,040 hours in any fiscal year, unless otherwise approved by the Board of Supervisors. The Health System is requesting authorization from the Board of Supervisors to continue utilizing the extra-help staff listed in Attachment A through June 30, 2020.

Extra-help and per diem staff are a reliable source of clinical and support services staff for variable staffing needs throughout the Health System. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact the County workforce daily, and as a result, emerging operational needs and labor
resources gaps are being identified as the Health System continues to prepare for uncertain surging circumstances. The continued deployment of these existing extra-help and per diem clinical and support services staff is critical to maintain essential service levels during the next few months. The extension of hours for extra-help and per diem staff is needed to provide adequate staffing coverage and to address fluctuating staffing demands to ensure safe and quality care are provided to the community.

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased inpatient volume, which requires additional staffing, such as extra-help and per diem staff, to support the continued mitigation efforts, such as screenings, testing, triage, and direct patient care. Extra-help and per diem staff are critical in maintaining the staffing model to ensure safe and quality patient care. These staff are used to backfill vacancies, sick leaves, and other leaves of absence, such as to cover staff that are or will be on leave under COVID-19 quarantine orders. In addition, the extra-help and per diem staff are all essential healthcare workers and are critical to the Health System’s ability to keep essential healthcare services in place and to increase capacity to care for patients. The availability of extra-help and per diem staff is necessary to ensure patient access and timely patient care. Maintaining the current extra-help and per diem staff during this time is especially crucial as it allows the Health System to focus on delivering uninterrupted essential services, because the staff are already familiar with the system and thus do not require extensive training. Approval of the recommended action would ensure that the Health System maintains and retains its staffing capacity to prepare for surge in demand.

**CHILD IMPACT**

The recommended action will have a positive impact on children as it affects access to healthcare services and supports the Health System’s vision of “Better Health for All.”

**SENIOR IMPACT**

The recommended action will have a positive impact on seniors as individuals over the age of 65 have been determined to be at higher risk for complications and death from COVID-19. The action also supports the Health System’s efforts to provide timely senior care throughout the Health System and supports the vision of “Better Health for All.”

**SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

The recommended action will have no/neutral sustainability implications.

**BACKGROUND**

The Public Health Department has confirmed over 2,200 cases of COVID-19 in Santa Clara County as of the writing of this legislative file. Compared to one month ago, the number of confirmed cases has increased more than 1,000%. Although the large increase in the number of confirmed cases is primarily due to the increase in testing, the numbers of residents infected are anticipated to continue to grow in the weeks and possibly months to come. The County of Santa Clara continues to take extraordinary measures to slow down the spread of the virus and to mitigate its impact on healthcare providers throughout the County. While
preparation efforts are being implemented, all existing staffing resources must be mobilized to preserve the healthcare infrastructure and workforce.

The identified extra-help and per diem staff have all previously worked in the Health System and are a trained, reliable source of employees that can augment current permanent staffing throughout the Health System. This request to extend extra-help and per diem staff hours for clinical and support staffing includes a variety of clinical and support positions in a number of different departments throughout the Health System’s three hospitals and their ancillary departments, such as Laboratory and Radiology. While the hospitals have worked to maintain a state of readiness for periodic influxes, the anticipated surge demand associated with COVID-19 will be a prolonged and major increase, and utilization of this pool of extra-help and per diem employees will be essential in assisting us in treating patients and protecting the health of the County.

CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION

Failure to approve the recommended action would make it more difficult to provide flexible staffing to support patient care during periods of increased activity. This could negatively impact patient access to care and disrupt service to patients.

STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL

The Clerk of the Board of Supervisors will notify Gilbert Gutierrez, Director of Clinical and Support Services.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Extra Help Employee Extension List (PDF)