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WHATCOM COUNTY
EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE

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July 7, 2023

Dear Executive Sidhu and County Council Members,

I am writing to request your consideration for granting funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to assist Christian Health Care Center (CHCC) with an emergency IT and communication situation.

Since 1956, CHCC has served north county residents from a health care campus in Lynden. We operate the only locally owned not-for-profit skilled nursing facility in Whatcom County, currently providing an essential service to approximately 100 older adults who need long-term care and short-term therapeutic rehabilitation services. (Visit chcclynden.org or contact me for additional information or an informational tour.)

Like many businesses, CHCC experienced unprecedented hardships during the pandemic. As healthcare professionals, we did everything in our power to provide quality care 24/7 to our residents, but the toll was high. Staffing, admissions and revenues decreased to all-time lows between 2020 and 2023. We had to cut back on numerous nonessential updates and improvements, including IT and communications, during that time.

As an organization, we are now focused on increasing staffing, admitting more residents, and prioritizing updates and improvements that were put on hold during the pandemic.

Unfortunately, our IT and telephone systems have been inspected by local experts—Bellingham-based ITonDemand—who report that our systems are in a situation of existential threat. The servers, overall infrastructure and telephone system are all obsolete and unable to be updated. We must replace them immediately as they could cease to function at any moment.

Such a cessation would impact our ability to receive, review and enter health care data. It would threaten our ability to provide services to our residents and could require an immediate transfer of the residents to other facilities, likely not in this area. A communications system failure would also impact approximately 200 people who work at CHCC as they would likely be without employment.

All of that to say, our need is critical and immediate. Your assistance through the ARPA funds would be nothing short of lifesaving. The funds would bridge a financial gap as we work to rebuild CHCC's financial health to pre-pandemic levels. Our goal is to ensure the long-term sustainability of this valuable north county resource for decades to come.

I am attaching a summary of the work that needs to be done, and I can provide detailed invoices for the first three projects, which total approximately \$88,000. The fourth project, which is the telephone system, is currently out for bid, but we expect it will cost between \$300,000-\$400,000.

On behalf of CHCC, its residents and staff, I am seeking ARPA grant assistance in the amount of \$350,000.

I acknowledge that this is a significant request and would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter by phone or in person. Our IT team can be included if their expertise is needed to answer your questions.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

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"the tradition of caring continues"