

# New Law to Help San Pablo Hospital Cheat Death

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City of San Pablo  
Doctors Medical Center of San Pablo

Moments before a midnight legislative deadline Sunday night, Gov. Jerry Brown signed a bill designed to help keep a Contra Costa County hospital's doors open for years to come.

SB 644, authored by Senator Lori Hancock, D-Oakland, will provide financial guarantees to lenders -- a necessary measure that officials say will help Doctors Medical Center in San Pablo pay off a nearly \$20-million debt and avoid closure.

"As a result of this new law, tens of thousands of East Bay residents will continue to have access to high quality medical care," Hancock said in a statement.

The hospital serves mostly Medi-Cal and Medicare patients and is West Contra Costa's only full-service emergency room facility, providing additional care for heart attack and stroke victims that are not offered at the nearby Kaiser Permanente Medical Center in Richmond, said Contra Costa County Supervisor John Gioia.

The supervisor, who also chairs DMC's governing board, said closing the hospital would be devastating for area residents and would heavily burden other nearby hospitals.

Gioia cited a study released by Contra Costa County Emergency Medical Services this summer that concluded that closing DMC would cause significantly longer wait times and overcrowding at other area hospitals.

"Stand-alone urban hospitals with a challenging payer mix have a difficult time surviving, which is why the additional help has been very important to this hospital surviving," he said.

In addition to plans to seek financing from various lenders, hospital officials hope to sustain funding with a local parcel tax that will be up for voter approval this November.