



Dear SoCal Region caregivers and physicians,

As some of you are aware, *Los Angeles Times* opinion columnist, Michael Hiltzik, published a column on Feb. 19 filled with false and misleading claims against Providence. Even though Providence provided Hiltzik with the information he requested, the facts were largely left out in order to help craft a convenient narrative in support of Hoag's ongoing litigation against Providence. Hiltzik, an opinion writer, frequently targets Catholic health care and has an established history of covering our organization in an unfair and inaccurate manner. We want you to have the facts.

Of all the false allegations, I am appalled by the claim that we would ever take action that would put the health and wellness of the communities we serve at risk, during COVID-19 or any other time. Doing so would be completely counterintuitive to our Mission. Providence has been there for Hoag throughout this entire health crisis — facilitating Hoag's participation in a remdesivir clinical trial, providing Hoag with remdesivir when their supply ran out, as well as sharing lifesaving ECMO machines to treat critically-ill patients. In addition, Hoag was saved from a major crisis when it joined St. Joseph Health after the largest primary care group, Greater Newport Physicians, left Hoag to partner with another local institution. St. Joseph Heritage Healthcare helped Hoag reestablish a primary care footprint effectively building Hoag Medical Group to what it is today.

While numerous allegations were made surrounding why Providence terminated Hoag's specialists from St. Joseph Heritage Healthcare, the fact is that it was Hoag's decision to pursue its own HMO contracts knowing full well that this would be the outcome. Hoag, as an affiliate, has the right to pursue its own payer contracts and always has had this right since the affiliation began. However, they were well aware that if they removed themselves from the HMO contracts we jointly contracted for over the years, they did so completely and fully, understanding that the continued participation of Hoag-affiliated specialists within the existing network would be terminated. Nonetheless, Hoag pursued this pathway and is now attempting to place blame on others for their own decisions.

As it pertains to why Hoag's facilities were removed from our website, this was again Hoag's choice to make. Hoag insisted that they not be listed in any social media, advertisements, marketing or community education where Providence's new brand identify would be used. We made several attempts to encourage them not to be left out of these mediums but, here again, they persisted. We respected Hoag's request that they not be listed until they received approvals from their founders and board to be listed within the updated Providence identity. If Hoag receives those approvals, or requests that they now be included, we would be pleased to include Hoag as an affiliate.

The notion that Providence's actions are designed to weaken Hoag as a potential future competitor in anticipation of the dissolution of Covenant Health Network is again, completely false. As demonstrated, Hoag's own actions led to the termination of the provider network, not Providence.

While the column makes claims that Providence would agree to disaffiliation with Hoag for a financial settlement, Providence always has been willing to find a resolution acceptable to all parties, and we have worked diligently to that end since Hoag requested independence from Providence. The parties have agreed to keep these discussions confidential, and we stand by that commitment.

From the very start of our affiliation, Hoag has always been allowed to make its own choices and has never been prevented from taking any action or decision that it wished to take. Providence's belief has always been that our patients, providers and all of our stakeholders in the Orange County community are stronger together than apart.

Despite the negative publicity campaign by those who wish to see us separate, Providence will always remain focused on what matters most: providing quality, comprehensive care to all. We will not be pressured by these false allegations and public relations campaigns from standing by our core values, the Mission of our organization and our integrity. We remain steadfast and unwavering.

Thank you all for your continued support and for your dedication to providing compassionate care to all we are honored to serve. Please refer to [ProvidenceOC.org](https://www.providenceoc.org) for more information about the outstanding accomplishments of our ministry and why we remain better TOGETHER.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Erik G. Wexler', written in a cursive style.

Erik G. Wexler
President, Operations and Strategy - South