

## **In Spirit of the Giving Season, San Mateo County Agencies Spread Holiday Cheer by Eliminating Over \$130 Million in Medical Debt**

*Pilot Program Initially Introduced to San Mateo County by Peninsula Health Care District*

**Burlingame, Calif., (December 20, 2022)** - Building on a program initially introduced by the Peninsula Health Care District (PHCD), the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors voted to enter into an agreement with RIP Medical Debt that eliminates over \$130 million in medical debt for over 70,000 San Mateo County residents.

Exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 1 in 3 Americans struggle to afford the cost of their health care. RIP Medical Debt is a 501(C)(3) nonprofit whose sole purpose is to locate, purchase and then abolish unpaid and unpayable medical debts belonging to those experiencing financial hardship as a benefit to society as well as the recipient.

RIP Medical Debt is canceling medical debt for 72,399 individuals who received services at San Mateo Medical Center (SMMC). Of those, 14,434 are PHCD residents. The face value of cancelled SMMC medical debt is \$135.4 million. Of that amount, \$29.3 million is for PHCD residents.

“Peninsula Health Care District is committed to serving the community in times of crisis,” says Lawrence W. Cappel, Ph.D., Chair of Board of Directors, Peninsula Health Care District. “Medical debt can cause generational financial and emotional distress and patient distrust in health care services, and many families are experiencing medical debt as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. RIP Medical Debt is a critical resource for San Mateo County.”

As a nonprofit, RIP Medical Debt serves its donors by abolishing medical debt for those experiencing financial hardship. Those who qualify for relief are either two times or below the federal poverty level or have debt that is five percent or more of their annual income.

For over 70 years, Peninsula Health Care District has implemented health-focused programs and services to the community to help residents achieve their optimal health. Previously, Peninsula Health Care District provided San Mateo County with \$3 million in emergency COVID-19 relief to create critical bed space during the height of the pandemic. PHCD has also opened community centers with services for senior health and mental health, and frequently hosts local events for all ages to keep community members informed and safe.

**About Peninsula Health Care District:** Founded in 1947, the Peninsula Health Care District serves the communities of San Bruno, Millbrae, Burlingame, Hillsborough, San Mateo, and Foster City by supporting the unique health and wellness priorities of our communities, and safeguarding access to health services, today and in the future. PHCD fulfills its commitment to the community through oversight of District assets and infrastructure, planning for future health care needs, and investing taxpayer dollars in local health-focused organizations and programs.

For more information: <https://peninsulahealthcaredistrict.org/>

**About RIP Medical Debt:** Since being founded in 2014 by two former debt collectors, RIP Medical Debt has acquired — and abolished — more than \$5 billion of burdensome medical debt, helping over 2.8 million families and addressing a major social determinant of health. RIP partners with individuals, faith-

based organizations, foundations, and corporations and empowers donors by converting every dollar contributed into \$100 of medical debt relief. RIP partners with hospitals and health systems and physician groups to acquire medical debt for abolishment. RIP rose to national prominence on an episode of HBO's "Last Week Tonight" with John Oliver in which RIP facilitated the abolishment of \$15M in medical debt. In December of 2020, philanthropist MacKenzie Scott donated \$50 million to RIP to help uplift struggling communities.

To learn more, visit <https://ripmedicaldebt.org/>