

# Want to save a child's life? Vote 'yes' on this California ballot measure

BY THE SACRAMENTO BEE EDITORIAL BOARD | SEPTEMBER 25, 2018 01:15 PM

Faced with a choice of whether to provide children with access to top-notch hospitals or leave them and their families to fend for themselves, big-hearted Californians have shown time and again that they will gladly hand over their tax dollars — even in the midst of a recession.

They should do so again this year by voting “yes” on [Proposition 4](#) on the Nov. 6 ballot.

The measure would authorize \$1.5 billion in general obligation bonds to build, expand, renovate and upgrade equipment at children's hospitals across the state, as well as the roughly 150 other hospitals that treat kids. Locally, it's a group that would include Sutter Children's Center and UC Davis Children's Hospital.

Collectively, these hospitals treat more than 2 million patients every year, often for serious procedures, including organ transplants, heart surgeries and cancer treatments.

In the past, this editorial board urged voters to reject two ballot measures similar to Proposition 4, arguing that California would essentially be undercutting its future by redirecting funds from schools and social services to hospitals, and by adding to the state's debt — concerns that remain today, as evidenced by Gov. Jerry Brown's neutral stance on this measure.

But in 2004, Proposition 61 passed anyway, putting \$750 million in bonds towards capital projects at children's hospitals. And in 2008, with the Great Recession bearing down on the state, voters also approved Proposition 3, providing another \$980 million.

Proposition 4 carries a larger price tag than those previous ballot measures; repaying the bonds would cost an average of \$80 million a year over the next 35 years, [according to the Legislative Analyst's Office](#). It also is broader in scope, applying to more than just the state's eight private children's hospitals and the five that are part of the UC system. It

also would set aside \$150 million for other public and private nonprofit hospitals that provide services to children.

But in many ways, the need has never been greater.

Nearly two-thirds of the patients at children's hospitals use Medi-Cal, but California issues reimbursements at an exceedingly low rate. There's also the new, costly requirement for hospitals to upgrade their facilities to stricter seismic standards by 2030. Without extra funding, cutbacks are likely.

[Unlike with Proposition 3](#), for example, which asks voters to approve \$8.9 billion in bonds for water projects while billions of dollars from previous ballot measures sits unspent, children's hospitals have used all of the funding from the prior bonds.

If Proposition 4 is approved, the California Health Facilities Financing Authority will decide what projects will be awarded. While the decisions should be made with care whenever the next economic downturn hits, now is not the time to skimp on California's kids.