

## **ORDINANCE 2024-15**

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF OKALOOSA COUNTY, FLORIDA; AUTHORIZING CREATION OF THE OKALOOSA COUNTY LOCAL PROVIDER PARTICIPATION FUND UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF ARTICLE VIII AND SECTION 1(F) OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA; SPECIFYING THE METHOD OF SETTING AND COMPUTING ANNUAL NON-AD VALOREM SPECIAL ASSESSMENTS TO BE DEPOSITED INTO THE FUND; SPECIFYING AUTHORIZED USES FOR THE FUND PROCEEDS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY, CODIFICATION AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

**WHEREAS**, the hospitals in Okaloosa County’s jurisdiction (the “Hospitals”) annually provide millions of dollars of uncompensated care to uninsured persons; and

**WHEREAS**, the Hospitals annually provide millions of dollars of uncompensated care to those who qualify for Medicaid because Medicaid, on average, historically covers only 60% of the costs of the health care services actually provided by Hospitals to Medicaid-eligible persons, leaving hospitals with significant uncompensated costs; and

**WHEREAS**, Hospitals annually provide millions of dollars in uncompensated, charity care to the indigent and uninsured; and

**WHEREAS**, the State of Florida (the “State”) operates several supplemental payment programs designed to provide funds to cover the reimbursement shortfall and to provide resources to support charity care; and

**WHEREAS**, non-public Hospitals have asked Okaloosa County (the “County”) to impose an assessment upon certain real property upon which Hospitals operate to help finance the non-federal share of Supplemental Payment Programs; and

**WHEREAS**, the only properties to be assessed are the real property sites of such Hospitals; and

**WHEREAS**, the funding raised by the County assessment will, through intergovernmental transfers (“IGTs”) provided consistent with federal guidelines, support additional funding for Medicaid payments to Hospitals; and

**WHEREAS**, the County acknowledges that the Hospital properties assessed can benefit directly and especially from the assessment as a result of the above-described additional funding; and

**WHEREAS**, the County has determined that a logical relationship exists between the services provided and the special and particular benefit to the real property upon which the Hospitals operate; and

**WHEREAS**, the County has an interest in promoting access to health care for its low-income and uninsured residents; and

**WHEREAS**, leveraging additional federal support through the above-described IGTs to fund Medicaid payments to the Hospitals for health care services directly and specifically benefits the properties upon which Hospitals operate and supports their continued ability to provide those services; and

**WHEREAS**, imposing an assessment limited to properties upon which Hospitals operate to help fund the provision of these services and the achievement of certain quality standards by the Hospitals to residents of the County is a valid public purpose that benefits the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of the County; and

**WHEREAS**, the assessment supports the financial stability and viability of the Hospitals providing such services; and

**WHEREAS**, the Hospitals are important contributors to the County's overall economy, and the financial benefit to these Hospitals directly and specifically supports their mission and their ability to grow, expand, and maintain their facilities in concert with the population growth in the jurisdiction of the County; and

**WHEREAS**, the County finds the assessment will enhance the Hospitals' ability to grow, expand, maintain, improve, and increase the value of their properties and facilities under all present circumstances and those of the foreseeable future; and

**WHEREAS**, the County is proposing a properly apportioned assessment by which all Hospitals will be assessed a uniform amount that is compliant with 42 C.F.R. § 433.68(d); and

**WHEREAS**, the County adopts this Ordinance enabling the County to levy a uniform non-ad valorem special assessment, which is fairly and reasonably apportioned among the properties upon which Hospitals operate within the County's jurisdictional limits, to establish and maintain a system of funding for IGTs to support the non-federal share of Supplemental Payment Programs, thus directly and specially benefitting properties upon which Hospitals operate.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF OKALOOSA COUNTY, FLORIDA:**

**DIVISION 1.** Chapter 11 of the Okaloosa County Code, is hereby amended, by adding a new Article VIII, as follows:

Sec. 11-705. - Title.

This Article VIII shall be known and may be cited as the “Okaloosa County Local Provider Participation Fund Ordinance.”

Sec. 11-706. - Authority.

Pursuant to Article VIII, Section 1(f) of the Constitution of the State of Florida and Chapter 125, Fla. Stat., the Board is hereby authorized to impose a special assessment against private for-profit and not-for-profit hospitals located within the County to fund the non-federal share of Medicaid payments associated with Local Services.

Sec. 11-707. - Purpose.

The non-ad valorem special assessment authorized by this article shall be imposed, levied, collected, and enforced against Assessed Properties located within the County. Proceeds from the Assessment shall be used to benefit Assessed Properties through enhanced Medicaid payments for Local Services. When imposed, the Assessment shall constitute a lien upon the Assessed Properties equal in rank and dignity with the liens of all state, county, district, or municipal taxes and other non-ad valorem assessments. Failure to pay may cause foreclosure proceedings, which could result in loss of title, to commence. The Assessment shall be computed and assessed only in the manner provided in this Ordinance.

Sec. 11-708. - Alternative Method.

This Ordinance shall be deemed to provide an additional and alternative method, as specified in § 197.3631, Fla. Stat., for the assessment and collection of the non-ad valorem special assessment described herein. The Ordinance shall be regarded as supplemental and additional to powers conferred by other laws and shall not be regarded as in derogation of any powers now existing, or which may exist in the future. This Ordinance, being necessary for the health, safety, and welfare of the inhabitants of the County, shall be liberally construed to effectuate the purposes hereof.

Sec. 11-709. - Definitions.

When used in this Ordinance, the following terms shall have the following meanings, unless the context clearly requires otherwise:

*Assessed Property* means the real property in the County to which an Institutional Health Care Provider holds a right of possession and right of use through an ownership or leasehold interest, thus making the property subject to the Assessment.

*Assessment* means a non-ad valorem special assessment imposed by the County on Assessed Property to fund the non-federal share of Medicaid payments that will benefit hospitals providing Local Services.

*Assessment Coordinator* means the person appointed to administer the Assessment imposed pursuant to this Article, or such person's designee.

*Assessment Resolution* means the resolution described in Section 11-713 hereof.

*Board* means the Board of County Commissioners of Okaloosa County, Florida.

*Comptroller* means the Okaloosa County Comptroller, ex officio Clerk to the Board, or other such person as may be duly authorized to act on such person's behalf.

*County* means Okaloosa County, Florida.

*Fiscal Year* means the period commencing on October 1 of each year and continuing through the next succeeding September 30, or such other period as may be prescribed by law as the fiscal year for the County.

*Institutional Health Care Provider* means a private for-profit or not-for-profit hospital that provides inpatient hospital services.

*Local Services* means the provision of health care services to Medicaid, indigent, and uninsured members of the Okaloosa County community and surrounding area.

*Non-Ad Valorem Assessment Roll* means the special assessment roll prepared by the County.

*Ordinance* means the Okaloosa County Local Provider Participation Fund Ordinance.

*Supplemental Payment Programs* mean the Medicaid payments made to Medicaid providers in addition to the Medicaid reimbursement rate received for services provided, including but not limited to the Statewide Medicaid Managed Care hospital directed payment program ("DPP") and the Low Income Pool ("LIP") program.

*Tax Collector* means the Okaloosa County Tax Collector.

Sec. 11-710. - Interpretation.

Unless the context indicates otherwise, the terms "hereof," "hereby," "herein," "hereto," "hereunder" and similar terms refer to this Article. The term "hereafter" means after, and the term "heretofore" means before the effective date of the Ordinance.

Sec. 11-711. - Scope of Assessment.

Pursuant to § 125.01, Fla. Stat., the Board is hereby authorized to create a non-ad valorem special assessment that shall be imposed, levied, collected, and enforced against Assessed Property to fund the non-federal share of Supplemental Payment Programs benefitting Assessed Properties providing Local Services in the County. Funds generated as a result of the Assessment shall be

held in an account called the local provider participation fund and shall be available to be used only to (1) provide to the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration the non-federal share for Supplemental Payment Programs , funding from which is made directly or indirectly in support of hospitals serving Medicaid, low income, and uninsured patients and (2) reimburse the County for administrative costs associated with the implementation of the Assessment authorized by this Ordinance, as further specified in the Assessment Resolution.

The Assessment must be broad based, and the amount of the Assessment must be uniformly imposed on each Assessed Property. The Assessment may not hold harmless any Institutional Health Care Provider, as required under 42 U.S.C. § 1396b(w). As set forth in Section 11-707, the Assessment shall constitute a lien upon the Assessed Properties equal in rank and dignity with the liens of all state, county, district, or municipal taxes and other non-ad valorem assessments. In addition to other remedies available at law or equity, the enforcement of the aforesaid Assessment shall be at the same time and in like manner as ad valorem taxes and subject to all ad valorem tax enforcement procedures afforded to the official annual real property tax notice.

Creation and implementation of the Assessment will not result in any additional pecuniary obligation on the County, Board, or County residents. The Assessment shall be imposed, levied, collected, and enforced against only Assessed Properties, and the Assessment Resolution shall provide that the County's administrative costs shall be reimbursed from the collected amounts. The County's administrative costs shall not exceed \$150,000 annually. Any reasonable expenses the County incurs to collect delinquent assessments or defense of claims that arise in the event the objectives and procedures of this article are challenged, including any attorney's fees incurred as a result of contracting with an attorney to represent the county in seeking and enforcing the collection of delinquent assessments or in defense of such claims, are not subject to the limitation on administrative costs.

#### Sec. 11-712. - Computation of Assessment.

The annual Assessment shall be specified for each Assessed Property. The Board shall set the Assessment in amounts that in the aggregate will generate sufficient revenue to fund the non-federal share of Supplemental Payment Programs associated with Local Services to be funded by the Assessment.

The amount of the Assessment required of each Assessed Property may not exceed an amount that, when added to the amount of other hospital assessments levied by the state or local government, exceeds the maximum percent of the aggregate net patient revenue of all Assessed Hospitals in the state permitted by 42 C.F.R. § 433.68(f)(3)(i)(A). Assessments for each Assessed Property will be derived from data contained in hospital cost reports and/or the Florida Hospital Uniform Reporting System, as available from the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration.

Sec. 11-713. - Assessment Resolution.

The Assessment Resolution shall describe (a) the Supplemental Payment Programs proposed for funding from proceeds of the Assessment; (b) the benefits to the Assessment Properties associated with the Assessment; (c) the methodology for computing the assessed amounts; and (d) the method of collection, including how and when the Assessment is to be paid.

Sec. 11-714. - Non-Ad Valorem Assessment Roll.

The Assessment Coordinator shall prepare, or direct the preparation of, the Non-Ad Valorem Assessment Roll, which shall contain the following:

- a) The names and addresses of the Assessed Properties; and
- b) The Assessment rate and amount of the Assessment to be imposed against each Assessed Property based on the Assessment Resolution.

The Non-Ad Valorem Assessment Roll shall be retained by the Assessment Coordinator and shall be open to public inspection. The foregoing shall not be construed to require that the Assessment Roll be in printed form if the amount of the Assessment for each Assessed Property can be determined by use of a computer terminal available to the public.

Sec. 11-715. - Notice by Publication.

The Assessment Coordinator shall publish once in a newspaper of general circulation within the County a notice stating that the Board, at a regular, adjourned, or special meeting on a certain day and hour, not earlier than 20 calendar days from such publication, will hear objections of all interested persons to approve the aforementioned Assessment. Such notice shall include:

- a) The Assessment rate;
- b) The procedure for objecting to the Assessment rate;
- c) The method by which the Assessment will be collected; and
- d) A statement that the Non-Ad Valorem Special Assessment Roll is available for inspection at the Office of the Assessment Coordinator.

Sec. 11-716. - Notice by Mail.

In addition to the published notice required by Section 11-715, but only for the first fiscal year in which an Assessment is imposed by the Board against Assessed Properties, the Assessment Coordinator shall provide notice of the proposed Assessment by first class mail to the Assessed Properties. Such notice shall include:

- a) The purpose of the Assessment;

- b) The Assessment rate to be levied against each Assessed Property;
- c) The unit of measurement used to determine the Assessment;
- d) The total revenue to be collected by the County from the Assessment;
- e) A statement that failure to pay the Assessment will cause a tax certificate to be issued against the property or foreclosure proceedings, either of which may result in a loss of title to the property;
- f) A statement that all affected and/or interested parties have a right to appear at the hearing and to file written objections with the Board within 20 days of the notice; and
- g) The date, time, and place of the hearing.

Notice shall be mailed at least 20 calendar days prior to the hearing to each Assessed Property at such address as is shown on the Assessment Roll. Notice shall be deemed mailed upon delivery thereof to the possession of the United States Postal Service. The Assessment Coordinator may provide proof of such notice by affidavit. Failure of the Assessed Property to receive such notice, because of mistake or inadvertence, shall not affect the validity of the Assessment Roll or release or discharge any obligation for payment of the Assessment imposed by the Board pursuant to this Article.

Sec. 11-717. - Adoption of Assessment Resolution and Non-Ad Valorem Assessment Roll.

At the time named in the notice, the Board shall receive and consider any written objections of interested persons. All objections to the Assessment Resolution and Non-Ad Valorem Assessment Roll shall be made in writing and filed with the Assessment Coordinator at or before the time or adjourned time of such hearing. At the date and time named in the notice, the Board may adopt the Assessment Resolution and Non-Ad Valorem Assessment Roll which shall:

- a) Set the rate of the Assessment to be imposed;
- b) Approve the Non-Ad Valorem Assessment Roll, with such amendments as it deems just and right; and
- c) Affirm the method of collection.

Sec. 11-718. - Revisions to the Assessment Roll.

The Board may revise the Non-Ad Valorem Assessment Roll one or more times during the Fiscal Year to modify the Assessment rate through the adoption of an additional Assessment Resolution, following the procedures described in Sections 11-712 through 11-717.

Sec. 11-719. - Effect of the Assessment Resolution.

The adoption of an Assessment Resolution shall be the final adjudication of the issues presented (including, but not limited to, the method of apportionment and Assessment, the Assessment rate, the initial rate of Assessment, the Non-Ad Valorem Assessment Roll, and the levy and lien of the Assessments), unless proper steps shall be initiated in a court of competent jurisdiction to secure relief within 20 days from the date of Board action on the Assessment Resolution. The Non-Ad Valorem Assessment Roll shall be delivered to the Tax Collector or such other official as the Board by resolution shall designate.

Sec. 11-720. - Method of Collection.

The amount of the Assessment is to be collected pursuant to the Alternative Method, as specified in the Assessment Resolution.

Sec. 11-721. - Refunds.

If, at the end of the Fiscal Year, additional amounts remain in the local provider participation fund, the Board is hereby authorized, upon a Board vote, to make a refund to Assessed Properties in proportion to amounts paid in during the Fiscal Year for all or a portion of the unutilized local provider participation fund. Otherwise, funds may roll over in the account for use in the next fiscal year.

Sec. 11-722. - Responsibility for Enforcement.

The County and its agent, if any, shall maintain the duty to enforce the prompt collection of the Assessment by the means provided herein. The duties related to collection of assessments may be enforced at the suit of any holder of obligations in a court of competent jurisdiction by mandamus or other appropriate proceedings or actions.

Sec. 11-723. - Correction of Errors and Omissions.

No act of error or omission on the part of the Comptroller, Property Appraiser, Tax Collector, Assessment Coordinator, Board, or their deputies or employees shall operate to release or discharge any obligation for payment of the Assessment imposed by the Board under the provision of this Chapter.

Sec. 11-724. - Limitations on Surcharges.

Payments made by Assessed Properties under this article may not be passed along to patients of the Assessed Property as a surcharge or as any other form of additional patient charge.

Sec. 11-725. – Release of Liability.

The Hospitals that are subject to the Assessments imposed pursuant to this Ordinance have requested adoption of this Ordinance and have given assurances to the County that the objectives and procedures addressed in this Ordinance are proper and lawful. Accordingly, each such of the Hospitals shall, as a prerequisite for the County imposing Assessments hereunder, forever release the County and its officers, employees, agents, and instrumentalities from any and all liability relating to the imposition of the Assessments each fiscal year. The release shall be in a form approved by the County Attorney's Office and submitted prior to the adoption of the Assessment Resolution. If any of the three participating Hospitals fail to submit a release, the County shall not impose the Assessments that year.

## **DIVISION 2. APPLICABILITY.**

It is hereby intended that this Ordinance shall constitute a uniform law applicable in all unincorporated areas of Okaloosa County, Florida, and to all incorporated areas of Okaloosa County where there is no existing conflict of law or municipal ordinance.

## **DIVISION 3. SEVERABILITY.**

If any portion of this Ordinance is held invalid or declared to be unconstitutional, inoperative, or void by any court of competent jurisdiction, such holdings shall not affect the validity of the remainder of this Ordinance.

## **DIVISION 4. RESOLUTION OF CONFLICT OF LAWS.**

In all instances where Florida law, as evidenced by the Florida Administrative Code, Florida Statutes, applicable case law or otherwise, mandates standards or requirements that are stricter than the provisions of this Ordinance, or where a matter is addressed by Florida law that is not addressed by this Ordinance, then said law shall govern. In situations where this Ordinance addresses a matter in a manner that is stricter than that of Florida law, the provisions of this Ordinance shall control.

## **DIVISION 5. INCLUSION IN THE OKALOOSA COUNTY CODE.**

The provisions of this Ordinance shall be included and incorporated in the Okaloosa County Code, as an addition or amendment thereto, and shall be appropriately renumbered to conform to the uniform numbering system of the Okaloosa County Code, once established.

## **DIVISION 6. FILING OF ORDINANCE.**

In accordance with the provisions of § 125.66, Fla. Stat., a certified copy of this Ordinance shall be filed with the Florida Department of State.

## **DIVISION 7. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

This Ordinance shall take effect as provided by law.


**PASSED AND DULY ADOPTED** by the Board of County Commissioners of Okaloosa County, Florida this 3<sup>rd</sup> day of September, 2024.

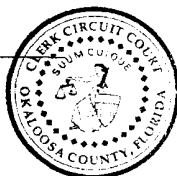
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF  
OKALOOSA COUNTY, FLORIDA

  
Paul Nixon, Chairman



ATTEST

  
JD Peacock II, Clerk



APPROVED AS TO FORM

  
Lynn M. Hoshihara, County Attorney



## FLORIDA DEPARTMENT *of* STATE

**RON DESANTIS**  
Governor

**CORD BYRD**  
Secretary of State

September 9, 2024

Honorable J. D. Peacock II  
Clerk of the Circuit Court  
Okaloosa County  
101 East James Lee Boulevard  
Crestview, Florida 32536-1359

Dear Honorable J.D. Peacock:

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 125.66, Florida Statutes, this will acknowledge receipt of your electronic copy of Okaloosa County Ordinance No. 2024-15, which was filed in this office on September 9, 2024.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Leijon  
Administrative Code and Register Director

AL/wlh

**R. A. Gray Building • 500 South Bronough Street • Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0250**  
**Telephone: (850) 245-6270**