

**Senate Health Committee
Oversight Hearing on Hospital Seismic Compliance
Wednesday, March 3, 2010**

Testimony of Martha Alvarez

I am Martha Alvarez, a certified nurse assistant at Centinela Hospital in Inglewood and a member of Service Employees International Union-United Healthcare Workers West. I have worked there for 36 years.

Centinela was bought by the for-profit owner Prime Healthcare Services in 2007. Centinela is one of the few hospitals in that part of South LA, one of the poorest and most underserved areas of L.A. County.

Like the rest of the world, I've been watching in horror as the people of Haiti and now Chile recover from devastating earthquakes.

Centinela has six structures that face a possible 2013 deadline. The project is zero percent complete according to state records.

I'm worried that Prime isn't planning to do the upgrades. Or maybe they're hoping for a bailout.

Prime complained to the State of California that it can't find the money to do upgrades, saying there is "no return on investment."

But Prime's investors have taken \$263 MILLION out to pad their pockets since 2007!

Of Prime's 13 California hospitals, including mine, seven face the 2013 deadline. Of these, Prime has not even opened projects with the state for three, and for the other four, the state has issued project numbers but the progress is at zero percent.

Something has to be done. We can't let our hospital collapse. Not physically, and not economically.

Responsible health systems should have the time they need to make a plan and do the work. But no one should be allowed to do what Prime is doing.

I strongly urge you to hold Prime Healthcare accountable. Prime needs a serious plan, and they need to fund it. Prime and other hospital systems can't be allowed to keep siphoning hundreds of millions of dollars from our hospitals, and tell you they can't find the money, and leave us and our communities at risk.

This is our hospital, and it's just too important.

Thank you.

