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American Health Care Act proposal puts progress and patients at risk

OAKLAND, CA, March 10, 2017 – The California Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems (CAPH) is expressing grave concerns about the impact that the “American Health Care Act” (H.R. 277) would have on patients and communities.

“This proposal would undermine public health systems’ ability to provide appropriate and cost-effective care to low-income Californians, and would return us to overcrowded emergency rooms and higher uncompensated care costs,” said CAPH President and CEO Erica Murray.

CAPH represents California’s 21 public health care systems, which make up the heart of the state’s health care safety net. These county-owned and operated facilities and University of California medical centers together account for just 6% of the state’s hospitals but provide care to 25% of the state’s Medicaid (Medi-Cal) beneficiaries. They operate half of California’s top level trauma and burn centers, train more than half of all new doctors in the state, and provide more than 75,000 jobs.

“The Medicaid expansion is working. Patients no longer feel afraid to seek the primary and preventive care they need to stay healthy and out of the hospital,” said Murray. “Cutting the funding for the expansion will pull the rug out from under thousands of working families – waitresses, truck drivers, contractors, and even nurses – who right now don’t have to choose between paying the rent and getting the care they need to stay healthy .”

California’s public health care systems together could lose more than \$2 billion per year in revenue if the expansion is repealed, and billions more over time as a result of the structural changes proposed in H.R. 277, which would cap federal spending on Medicaid. Medi-Cal is already one of the leanest and most efficient Medicaid programs in the country, and significant cuts like these would force the state to make the terrible choice of reducing enrollment, cutting critical services, or passing massive costs onto local entities.

“These combined cuts would cripple the Medi-Cal program as it exists today, and would cause irreparable harm to the health and well-being of the millions of Californians who rely on it,” said Murray.