



July 22, 2020

The Honorable Jerry Hill Chair
Senate Labor, Public Employment and Retirement Committee
State Capitol, Room 2114
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Oppose Unless Amended – AB 2537 (Rodriguez)

Dear Chairman Hill,

On behalf of the members of the California Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems and the millions of patients they serve, I am writing to voice our opposition to AB 2537 (Rodriguez). The safety of health care workers remains a top priority for public health care systems during the COVID-19 pandemic. AB 2537, however, would penalize hospitals for circumstances that are beyond their control – the inability to secure a six-month stockpile of personal protective equipment (PPE).

As you know, California's 21 public health care systems are the core of the state's health care safety net, delivering high-quality care to more than 2.85 million patients annually, regardless of ability to pay or insurance status. Public health care systems include both county-operated or -affiliated facilities as well as the University of California medical centers. Most patients seen in public health care systems are either Medi-Cal beneficiaries or remain uninsured. Statewide, public health care systems provide nearly 40 percent of all hospital care to the state's uninsured, and 35 percent of all hospital care to Medi-Cal patients in the communities they serve. Public health care systems also operate over half of the state's top-level trauma and burn centers, and train half of all physicians in the state.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light global supply chain issues surrounding PPE, including N95 respirators, surgical masks, face shields, isolation gowns, gloves, and other critical supplies. At the start of this emergency, many public health care systems struggled to obtain PPE, because there was a severe shortage in the supply chain from overseas. Public health care systems worked with their local Medical and Health Operational Area Coordination programs, supply distributors, their communities, and sourced supplies from the strategic national stockpile. Today, the health care supply chain, especially for PPE, remains challenged and spotty. Health care providers, and even the State, are still having significant difficulty getting all that is needed to care for patients and keep workers safe, let alone to stockpile for the future. AB 2537 goes beyond reasonable preparedness and would penalize hospitals for circumstances that are beyond their control.

We recognize the critical need for PPE during this pandemic and remain fully committed to doing everything we can to make sure staff at our health care systems have the supplies they need to provide high quality care and minimize risk of exposure. Further collaboration is needed between the federal, state, and local governments, manufacturers and suppliers, and hospital and health care providers to increase the availability of PPE, before any stockpile requirements can be placed on hospitals.

It is for these reasons that we oppose AB 2537, unless amended, and respectfully ask for a “NO” vote. We would be pleased to further discuss our position with you and answer any questions you may have. Please contact Kelly Brooks-Lindsey, our Sacramento representative, at 916-272-0011 if you would like to follow-up. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Sarah Hesketh
Sr. Vice President of External Affairs
510.874.7113
shesketh@caph.org

cc: The Honorable Freddie Rodriguez
The Honorable Members of the Senate Labor, Public Employment and Retirement
Committee
Jake Ferrera, Committee Consultant
Corry Botts, Republican Consultant
Kelly Brooks-Lindsey, Hurst Brooks Espinosa