



June 8, 2022

The Honorable Marc Berman
Chair, Assembly Business & Professions Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 379
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support – SB 872 (Dodd) Pharmacies: mobile units

Dear Chair Berman,

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 support of SB 872. This bill would authorize counties to operate licensed mobile pharmacy units to provide much needed prescription medications to residents, including people who are experiencing homelessness.

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 3.7 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 five University of California medical centers. Statewide, public health care systems employ 85,000 workers, provide over 40 percent of all hospital care to persons who are uninsured, and nearly 40 percent of all hospital care to persons covered by the Medi-Cal program 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.

Over 150,000 people experience homelessness in California on any given day. People experiencing street-based homelessness often have significant health care needs. The mortality rates of this population are 10 times higher than the overall adult population, and they experience trauma, hospitalization, and readmissions at higher rates. On average, this population has a life expectancy of around 50 years of age. In contrast, life expectancy for California's general population is around 80 years.

Many public health care systems and/or county partners deploy street medicine or backpack medicine teams to serve persons experiencing homelessness. For example, the San Francisco Department of Public Health operates a Street Medicine Team that provides street-based services to persons experiencing homelessness who have medical, mental health, and/or substance use needs, regardless of insurance coverage, which operates in locations such as streets, parks, encampments, sobering centers, and navigation centers.

Because current law only authorizes mobile pharmacies to operate in very narrow circumstances involving disasters, it is difficult to provide prescription medications outside of a fixed location (e.g., a retail pharmacy or clinic) to serve patients that are receiving care in non-traditional settings, such as on the street. Many patients that lack transportation or that face other barriers to obtaining medications from fixed pharmacy locations may go without needed medications. By providing local jurisdictions with

the ability to operate mobile pharmacies, licensed by the Board of Pharmacy, to go directly into the community, vulnerable and high-risk patients including persons experiencing homelessness can get access to needed and often lifesaving medications.

Because some county-affiliated public health care systems operate via local hospital authorities that are separate and distinct entities from the county, we respectfully request that hospital authorities also be added as units of local government that would be authorized to operate these mobile pharmacy units.

In addition, we are supportive of the amendments proposed by the San Francisco Department of Public Health to 1) allow these mobile units to provide medications to treat substance use disorders and 2) clarify in the language that medications prescribed by all legal prescribers, such as nurse practitioners, could be provided by the mobile units.

For the reasons described above, we support SB 872. We would be pleased to further discuss our position and suggested amendments with you and answer any questions you may have. Please contact Kelly Brooks-Lindsey, our Sacramento representative, at 916-753-0844 if you would like to follow-up. Thank you for your consideration and leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,



Sarah Hesketh
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cc:

The Honorable Bill Dodd
The Honorable Members of the Assembly Business & Professions Committee
Annabel Smith, Consultant, Assembly Business & Professions Committee
Bill Lewis, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus
Kelly Brooks-Lindsey, Hurst Brooks Espinosa