



September 9, 2022

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Request for Signature – RE: AB 2697 (Aguiar-Curry): Medi-Cal: community health workers services

Dear Governor Newsom,

On behalf of the members of the California Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems and the millions of patients our members serve, I am writing to voice our support for AB 2697 and request that you sign it into law. AB 2697 would codify the Department of Health Care Services' (DHCS) efforts to establish a Community Health Worker/Promotores (CHW/P) Medi-Cal health benefit.

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. Public health care systems 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 primarily serve individuals from underrepresented communities, including persons of color, individuals experiencing financial hardship or homelessness, and individuals with complex social and medical needs. Nearly 60 percent of patients served at public health care systems identify as persons of color, and many report a primary language other than English. Given the patient population served, public health care systems play multiple significant roles in their communities and have a profound impact on the health and health care of millions of Californians.

As core safety net providers, public health care systems understand the unique role that CHW/Ps play as a bridge to underserved communities, particularly those that experience inequities in care. Public health care systems operate comprehensive CHW/P programs with staff who live and work in the communities they serve and who are able to draw on their shared experience with patients to build trust. Most recently, public health care systems expanded their CHW/P programs through the DHCS Whole Person Care (WPC) pilot, which allowed the flexibility to pay for CHW/P services that typically are not covered by Medi-Cal. The WPC interim evaluation found that CHW/Ps were key assets for coordinating care across health, behavioral health, and social services and addressing complex medical and social needs.

Based in part on the success of WPC, the State added a new CHW/P benefit that will be available to 16 million Medi-Cal beneficiaries beginning July 2022. AB 2697 would codify the new benefit and promote continued stakeholder collaboration with DHCS. Additionally, this bill would advance health equity by ensuring robust take-up of CHW/P services, which have been shown to improve health outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse Californians.

It is for these reasons that we support AB 2697. 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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sarah Hesketh".

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

cc: The Honorable Cecilia Aguiar-Curry
Tam Ma, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom
Samantha Lui, Deputy Secretary, California Health and Human Services Agency
Carol Gallegos, Deputy Director, Department of Health Care Services
Kelly Brooks-Lindsey, Hurst Brooks Espinosa