August 31, 2022

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

Subject: Request for Signature – RE: SB 923 (Wiener): Gender-affirming care

Dear Governor Newsom,

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 for SB 923, which would improve access to culturally competent and gender-affirming care for transgender, gender non-conforming, or intersex (TGI) people.

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. Although they represent just six percent of all California hospitals statewide, they provide over 40 percent of all hospital care to the state's uninsured and nearly 40 percent of all hospital care to the Medi-Cal population 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 safety net providers that serve many disadvantaged populations in our communities, including TGI people, we recognize the necessity of breaking down as many barriers as possible between our patients and health care and related supports. In comparison to the general population, LGBTQ+ individuals are more likely to experience multiple complex challenges to their health and well-being, including chronic health conditions, behavioral health conditions, and sexual and physical violence. These disparities are even greater for TGI people. For example, due to fear of discrimination, 28% of transgender individuals have reported postponing or not receiving necessary medical care.[1] Lack of access to care only further exacerbates health disparities for LGBTQ+ individuals, especially TGI people.

SB 923 would require health plans to have linguistic and cultural competency training for their staff and maintain and update a list of in-network providers who offer and provide gender-affirming services, as well as require providers to have cultural competency training under their continuous medical education. Additionally, this bill would require the California Health and Human Services Agency to

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[1] "The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey," The National Center for Transgender Equality, December 2016. https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/usts/USTS-Full-Report-Dec17.pdf

convene a working group to develop quality standards for patient experience to measure cultural competency and recommended training curriculum to provide gender-affirming care. These requirements would support efforts to provide all individuals seeking gender-affirming care with the tools to find appropriate providers and help ensure that the care is relevant to their unique health needs.

It is for these reasons that we support SB 923. 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
Senior Vice President of External Affairs
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cc: The Honorable Scott Wiener
       Tam Ma, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom
       Christy Bouma, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom
       Samantha Lui, Deputy Secretary, California Health and Human Services Agency
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