

August 9, 2023

The Honorable Chris R. Holden
Chair of the Assembly Committee on Appropriations
1021 O Street, Suite 8220
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 282 (Eggman) – CO-SPONSOR – Same Day Access

Dear Chairman Holden:

We write on behalf of CaliforniaHealth+ Advocates and the California Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems (CAPH) as the proud co-sponsors of Senate Bill 282 authored by Senator Susan Talamantes Eggman. CaliforniaHealth+ Advocates is the advocacy affiliate of the California Primary Care Association, who advocates on behalf of California's 1,270 community health centers (CHCs) who provide high-quality comprehensive care to more than 1 in 5 Californians, 7.7 million people. CHC's encompass California's community clinics, free clinics, federally qualified health centers and rural health centers. Public health care systems include both county operated and affiliated facilities, as well as the five University of California medical centers. Public health care systems employ nearly 90,000 workers and provide 40% of all hospital care to the Medi-Cal population in the communities they serve. Many public health care systems operate an extensive network of FQHCs to meet the needs of their patients. Together, California's community health centers (CHCs) and 21 public health care systems are the core of the state's health care safety net, delivering high-quality care to millions of patients each year. Public health care system FQHCs and CHCs provide the full spectrum of care, from primary care to dental to behavioral health, to everyone who walks through their doors, regardless of their ability to pay, their immigration status, or their individual circumstances.

SB 282 would allow clinics to receive reimbursement for both primary or specialty care and mental health services provided to a patient on the same day. Under current law California doesn't allow Medi-Cal to reimburse for same day access to services, even when both a physical health and mental health visit are needed by a patient.

Recently, the California Health Care Foundation (CHCF) published a report looking at the fiscal effect of this policy. It estimates a \$23.4 million cost. Additionally, if you consider that 65% of Medi-Cal payments are covered by the federal government, the ultimate direct cost to the state would likely be less than \$10 million for the implementation of same day access. This is significantly lower than the cost the Department of Finance (DOF) has indicated in the "mid to high hundreds of millions of dollars."

SB 282 would also likely produce significant downstream cost savings by increasing preventive care and avoiding larger costs to the system, such as emergency room visits and inpatient psychiatric treatment. The ability to seamlessly coordinate care and create warm hand offs from a primary care provider to a mental health specialist on the same day, has proven highly effective

in ensuring patients have access to care and will follow through with the recommended treatment. *Allowing patients to have access to timely mental health interventions in the clinic setting is the right thing to do for patients and will likely lead to savings for Medi-Cal in the long run.*

Same day exclusion is a California policy that runs counter to both federal policy and Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) guidance. **According to the National Association of Health Centers (NACHC) at least 46 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico have amended their laws so Medicaid beneficiaries can access medical and behavioral health care in one day, rather than having to travel back and forth for different visits.** This approach is supported by CMS, as indicated in its August 18, 2022, letter encouraging states to allow for same day access and subsequent October 2022 guidance that supports removing same day exclusions.

SB 282 will make sure California's clinics can continue to strengthen care coordination and integration for the millions of patients the system serves, support the behavioral health initiatives being driven by the Legislature and Governor Newsom; and ultimately save California's healthcare system money by ensuring there is more prevention and early intervention in mental health.

For all these reasons, CaliforniaHealth+ Advocates and CAPH are proud to co-sponsor SB 282 and respectfully request passage of this legislation when it comes before your committee on the suspense file.

Sincerely,



Erica B. Murray, President, and CEO
California Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems



Taylor Jackson, Deputy Director of Government Affairs
CaliforniaHealth+ Advocates