



April 25, 2025

The Honorable Buffy Wicks
Chair, Assembly Appropriations Committee
1021 O St., #8140
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SUPPORT – AB 618 (Krell): Medi-Cal: behavioral health: data sharing

Dear Chair Wicks,

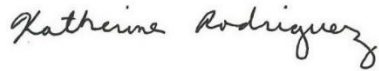
On behalf of the members of the California Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems and the millions of patients they serve, I am writing to voice our support of AB 618 (Krell). This bill would enable the timely exchange of health information between Medi-Cal managed care plans and county specialty mental health plans, to improve the coordination of behavioral health care for patients in need.

California's 17 public health care systems, which include county-operated and affiliated facilities and the five University of California health systems, are the core of the state's health care safety net. County public health care systems have a mission and mandate to deliver high-quality care to all, regardless of ability to pay or insurance status, across a comprehensive range of services. Despite representing only 6% of all hospitals statewide, public health care systems provide 35% of all Medi-Cal and uninsured hospital care. They contribute over \$4 billion annually to the Medi-Cal program, in place of the state's share, with many of their payments uniquely tied to quality and performance improvements. Additionally, these systems train a diverse and inclusive workforce, including nearly half of all new doctors in hospitals across the state.

Over the last few years, the Legislature and Administration have worked to address gaps in our state's behavioral health continuum of care. Yet, the exchange of behavioral health data for Medi-Cal patients remains largely inconsistent and lacks clear guidance in the timely exchange of information. Without access to timely data, health plans and counties are unable to coordinate and provide comprehensive, whole-person care to low-income communities, particularly for individuals experiencing severe mental illness and substance use disorders. This is especially challenging as plans and providers seek to implement ambitious Medi-Cal initiatives, such as [CalAIM](#) and BH-CONNECT. AB 618 provides state leaders with an opportunity to address these barriers by requiring the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) to establish minimum data standards, in consultation with stakeholders, for sharing behavioral health information. The bill will facilitate the flow of data between providers and counties and equip them with the necessary information to care for their highest-need patients.

For these reasons, we support AB 618 (Krell). If you have any questions regarding our position on this bill, please contact Kelly Brooks-Lindsey, our Sacramento representative, at 916-272-0011. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Katherine Rodriguez".

Katie Rodriguez
Vice President of Policy and Government Relations
California Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems

CC: The Honorable Maggy Krell
The Honorable Members of the Assembly Appropriations Committee
Allegra Kim, Consultant, Assembly Appropriations Committee
Justin Boman, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus