



CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC HOSPITALS AND HEALTH SYSTEMS

April 3, 2007

The Honorable Mervyn Dymally
Chair, Assembly Health Committee
State Capitol, Room 6005
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUBJECT: AB 1057 (Beall) -- SUPPORT

Dear Assemblyman Dymally:

On behalf of the California Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems (CAPH), I am writing to offer support for AB1057 (Berg), which would establish an advisory committee on electronic personal records.

Public hospital systems represent the core of the safety net, and are experts at treating low income and uninsured patients. Though just 6 percent of all hospitals statewide, public hospitals provide roughly half of the hospital care to the state's 6.5 million uninsured. They operate approximately 60 percent of all top-level trauma centers and nearly 45 percent of all burn units. Public hospitals also deliver nearly 11 million outpatient visits a year. Their medical education programs train 45 percent of all doctors in California.

In addition to these critical services, public hospitals are leaders improving quality of care. They have developed and implemented cutting-edge programs in chronic disease management, cultural and linguistic competency, cost-effective care delivery, and patient safety.

Health information technology is central to all of the critical services and quality improvement work taking place in public hospitals across California. Whether it is to share patient data between hospital departments or with a community clinic, or to use patient registries to monitor chronically ill patients' health status, or to report quality data measures for a pay-for-performance program, IT systems serve as the engine that powers patient care and quality improvement. Public hospitals have enhanced their IT systems in order to sustain and build upon these improvements and achieve even greater efficiencies of care. As major providers of care for the State's Medi-Cal and uninsured populations, such improvements enable the State to realize savings as appropriate health care utilization leads to greater cost effectiveness in public programs such as Medi-Cal.

Health IT can have a profound impact on health care and health outcomes. Patients who are able to utilize personal health records can monitor their health and work more effectively with their providers in managing chronic diseases and other acute conditions. Although most safety net

patients lack individual access to personal health records, public hospitals have been working to expand access to PHRs at health care facilities to improve care coordination for medically complex patients. For example, LAC+USC Health Network in Los Angeles has embarked on a venture with COPE Health Services and several local community health centers to use personal health records to help reduce the number of “frequent users” who present in the ED. Case managers enroll these patients into the program and schedule an appointment within one week at a county or community clinic that is closest to home. This clinic becomes the patient’s designated medical home. The facility is noted on the patient’s health record, which he or she can access via the Internet. By agreeing to participate in the program, community health centers obtain access to the hospital’s patient record system, allowing them to view recent inpatient stays, discharge reports, labs and prescriptions. This access can reduce expensive ED treatments, duplication of tests and services, and improve efficiency throughout the health care safety net as a whole.

As the above example indicates, public hospitals have a unique perspective on the potential for personal health records to improve health outcomes for safety net patients and to increase operational efficiencies in safety net facilities. For this reason, we ask that public hospitals be represented on the advisory committee that is established in AB 1057 and we urge you to vote “AYE” when the bill is considered by the Assembly Health Committee.

If you have any questions, please contact Terri Thomas, our Sacramento representative, at 916-325-1010.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melissa Stafford Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Melissa Stafford Jones
President, CEO

cc: The Honorable Members, Assembly Committee on Health
Terri Thomas
Teri Boughton, Consultant, Assembly Committee on Health