



CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC HOSPITALS AND HEALTH SYSTEMS

April 18, 2007

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

SUBJECT: AB 8 (Nuñez) – SUPPORT WITH RECOMMENDATIONS

Dear Assemblyman Dymally:

The California Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems (CAPH) shares Speaker Nuñez's commitment to ensuring universal health care coverage and access to quality health care services for all Californians. 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 about 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. Given this role, public hospitals are logical building blocks for health care reform.

AB 8 offers an important step forward in developing comprehensive health care reform. However, it raises several policy concerns and issues that we believe should be addressed as the bill moves forward. For example, universal health care coverage must expand access to care for all Californians. We are pleased that AB 8 expands the number of children and adults who would be eligible for the Medi-Cal and Healthy Families programs. As major providers of care for the state's 10 million Medi-Cal beneficiaries, public hospitals applaud this expansion of a vital safety net program. Given the strains on the current Medi-Cal system, we encourage the inclusion of Medi-Cal rate increases to strengthen the program and improve access to care for beneficiaries. Similarly, as newly enrolled individuals seek health care services, it is critical that the health care delivery system be able to meet current and future demands. We therefore recommend that AB 8 invest in the capacity of the health care delivery system so that people can get health care services when and where they need them. Finally, in order to support the community-wide services we provide – trauma, burn, and training, for example – universal coverage must be structured in a systemic way that ensures sustainable public hospital participation and success. We therefore encourage that AB 8 include structures that support public hospitals to ensure access to care for Californians.

These issues and recommendations are described in greater detail in the enclosed document. CAPH appreciates your consideration of these recommendations and is pleased to offer general support with recommendations for AB 8 (Nuñez).

Thank you for your attention. If you have any questions, please feel free to 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, CEO & President

cc: Assemblyman Fabian Nuñez, Speaker
Members, Assembly Health Committee
Teri Boughton, Chief Consultant, Assembly Health Committee
Almis Udrys, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus
Terri Thomas