



April 30, 2026

The Honorable Buffy Wicks
Chair, Assembly Appropriations Committee
1020 N Street, Room 8220
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUBJECT: AB 1979 (Bonta) – Oppose Unless Amended

Dear Assemblymember Wicks:

From early cancer detection and patient deterioration alerts to streamlined clinical documentation, artificial intelligence (AI) is a critical tool for delivering high-quality, efficient, and affordable care. Used appropriately, with clinicians at the forefront, AI and clinical support systems save lives, improve health care outcomes, enhance patient satisfaction, and reduce the non-clinical workload for health care workers.

AI tools are just that — tools. They assist clinicians by improving early detection, reducing burnout, and increasing time available for patient care, while preserving clinician oversight and accountability. Unfortunately, Assembly Bill (AB) 1979 (Bonta, D-Oakland) fails to distinguish between AI that **informs** clinical decisions and AI that **replaces** them and would impose sweeping prohibitions on not just AI systems, but also a wide range of patient-centered technologies that have been widely used for years. **For these reasons, the California Hospital Association (CHA), on behalf of nearly 400 hospitals and health systems, respectfully opposes AB 1979 unless it is amended to remove Section 2, which would prohibit the use of AI and other technological tools in a health care setting.**

The state of California is a large purchaser of health care services, responsible for state employees, Medi-Cal recipients, prisoners, and others. As overall health care costs in California increase, the state's costs rise as well. This bill would increase health care costs as described below.

Hospitals and health systems will face costs associated with auditing every AI-enabled tool currently in operation to determine whether it touches activities that “require professional judgment.” This analysis will be necessary for all hospitals — including public and safety-net facilities — as AI technology is embedded throughout electronic health record platforms in the form of best practice alerts, predictive risk flags, clinical decision support modules, and procedure and reimbursement coding assistance. None of these are plug-and-play components that can be cleanly disabled. Determining what must be turned off, renegotiating vendor contracts where AI functionality is bundled into core platform licensing, and documenting compliance decisions will require substantial legal, compliance, and information technology


resources. These costs would be borne entirely by health facilities, with no mechanism for reimbursement provided in the bill.

In addition to these financial hurdles, this bill poses a substantial roadblock to compliance with current law. California's Data Exchange Framework and its implementing regulations require health facilities to share patient data in real time. Complying with AB 1979 may require health systems to disable or architecturally separate AI logic from data exchange workflows that the state has simultaneously mandated.

AB 1979 would also undermine improvements generated through current technology by disrupting existing, widely used, and beneficial technologies embedded in electronic health record platforms, where AI supports functions such as predictive alerts, clinical summarization, and documentation. These capabilities are deeply integrated into clinical workflows and cannot be removed without compromising data quality, workflow efficiency, and interoperability. Even more troublingly, rolling back patient care-related functions, like predictive alerts, would erode critical patient safety gains that have saved lives.

For these reasons, CHA opposes AB 1979 unless it is amended. Hospitals look forward to continued conversations to address the concerns outlined above in future amendments to the bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Farouk', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Mark Farouk
Vice President, State Advocacy

cc: The Honorable Mia Bonta
The Honorable Members of the Assembly Appropriations Committee
Allegra Kim, Principal Consultant, Assembly Appropriations Committee
Joe Shinstock, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus