



May 8, 2025

The Honorable Buffy Wicks
Chair, Assembly Appropriations Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 8220
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUBJECT: AB 849 (Soria) – OPPOSE UNLESS AMENDED

Dear Assemblymember Wicks:

California hospitals are deeply committed to ensuring that patients and staff feel safe, respected, and supported during their care. As part of this commitment, hospitals routinely provide medical chaperones for sensitive examinations when possible and in accordance with their individual policies and available resources. Unfortunately, Assembly Bill (AB) 849 would eliminate this critical flexibility, and instead create a new staffing mandate that would be extremely difficult and increase the cost of health care at a time when affordability of care is a priority. **On behalf of more than 400 hospitals and health systems, the California Hospital Association (CHA), respectfully opposes AB 849 unless it is amended.**

AB 849 would require medical providers, including hospitals, to inform patients that a medical chaperone is available upon request for sensitive examinations performed by a sonographer. CHA appreciates the author's willingness to collaborate to address several concerns, and hospitals fully share the goal of protecting patients' dignity and safety during sensitive examinations. However, AB 849, as currently drafted, presents significant staffing and operational challenges.

Every day, hospitals navigate staffing shortages to ensure the provision of patient care. Hospitals that currently provide medical chaperones rely on flexibility to offer patients alternatives if a chaperone is unavailable due to staffing limitations. In those instances, hospitals work with the patient to develop a solution that respects the patient's preferences and is operationally feasible.

This new staffing requirement would increase costs at a time when affordability remains a focus for all health care providers. With hospitals already under financial strain and bracing for Medicare and Medi-Cal cuts, added costs would further jeopardize hospitals' ability to provide access to high-quality care.

CHA remains committed to continuing to work with the author to find a path forward that protects patients while allowing hospitals to adjust to staffing limitations without disrupting patient care.

For these reasons, CHA is opposed to AB 849 unless it is amended to address these concerns.

Sincerely,

Vanessa Gonzalez

Vanessa Gonzalez

Vice President, State Advocacy

cc: The Honorable Esmeralda Soria
The Honorable Members of the Assembly Appropriations Committee
Allegra Kim, Principal Consultant, Assembly Appropriations Committee
Justin Boman, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus