

Talking Points

March 26, 2024

Hospitals are Safe for Earthquakes, but Access to Health Care is at Risk

Without time and legislative reform, access to vital health services is at risk throughout California.

Hospitals are an important part of their communities, and California must do all it can to ensure that patients have uninterrupted access to care.

- Under current law, hospital buildings that are unable to meet the state's seismic standards by Jan. 1, 2030, will be forced to close **and patient care will cease in those buildings.**

Patients and health care workers are safe — hospitals will stand after an earthquake.

- Right now, hospitals have already met the 2020 state standard for building integrity and are among the safest buildings in California. They have spent billions of dollars to retrofit and rebuild facilities for patient care and to protect patients and workers.
- More than 98% of hospital buildings in California have met the state's current requirements to remain standing, keeping patients and workers safer after an earthquake.

Hospitals need legislative change and the time to make sure they can continue to meet communities' needs following an earthquake.

- California should not force hospitals to prioritize construction over patient care, which hurts health access everywhere. California's most vulnerable populations will be the hardest hit if hospitals are forced to close.
- The deadline for seismic upgrades should be extended to provide the time needed to retrofit or rebuild buildings. California should take the lead and guarantee that every health care dollar is wisely invested in patient care.
- The state must also consider the unique needs of California's rural hospitals, especially those that cannot access funding for construction.

The state must consider the impact of the operational standard on health care access and cost.

- As the state works to hold health care costs in check, it must consider the impact the over \$100 billion in hospital infrastructure spending would have on health care costs. Directing the Office of Health Care Affordability to analyze the cost of this mandate and its impact on affordability will be critical to ensuring access to health care across California.
- The Department of Health Care Access and Information should understand whether a hospital can meet the full requirement or would be forced to modify services to comply, and report to the Legislature on the impacts to health care services for patients throughout California.
- There will be hospitals and systems that cannot afford the construction. The state must be a partner in compliance, considering and proposing funding options for hospitals, particularly in California's most vulnerable populations.