

Talking Points

August 16, 2024

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

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. Hospitals have spent billions of dollars to retrofit and rebuild facilities to protect patients and workers.
- More than 98% of hospital buildings in California have met the state's life and safety requirements to remain standing in the event of an earthquake.

Without meaningful 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.**

SB 1432 would provide time and enhances transparency and accountability for seismic compliance.

- The bill would provide up to a five-year time extension depending on the hospital's project construction complexity, impact of construction on acute care services, and the ability of the hospital to finance a project. This time will allow for hospitals to balance compliance with preserving access to care.
- Also, the bill would add requirements for enhancing transparency and improving government accountability, including penalties, milestones, and enhanced seismic compliance plans.

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

- The Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI) should understand the impact of hospital construction projects on a community when assessing whether to approve or deny a hospital's compliance plan.
- HCAI should consider impacts on access to key services in hospitals' surrounding communities when determining whether to grant an extension.
- Additionally, HCAI should consider whether an extension would preserve service lines or whether staging projects would minimize the impact to hospital capacity in a community.
- HCAI must also report on the statewide cost for compliance with the operational requirements.