



March 11, 2026

The Honorable Senator Akilah Weber Pierson, MD
Chair, Senate Health Committee
1021 O Street, Room 3310
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUBJECT: SB 964 (Smallwood-Cuevas) – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Weber Pierson:

Every day, California hospitals witness how prior authorization requirements are making it difficult for patients to receive the care their clinicians prescribe. These processes often delay necessary treatment for patients with chronic medical conditions (including cancer), divert valuable clinical staff time away from patient care, and create unnecessary friction in care coordination.

That's why, on behalf of nearly 400 hospitals and health systems committed to improving the health of all Californians, the California Hospital Association is pleased to support Senate Bill (SB) 964 (Smallwood-Cuevas, D-Los Angeles).

SB 964, which offers thoughtful and balanced reform that meaningfully reduces administrative barriers to care while preserving appropriate safeguards, would advance several important objectives:

- **Reduces unnecessary prior authorization burden** by allowing up to two doses or frequency adjustments of an already-approved medication without additional utilization management
- **Improves continuity of care** for patients with chronic conditions, including cancer, by ensuring that stable therapies are not disrupted
- **Supports clinical judgment** by allowing licensed health care professionals to tailor dosing to meet a patient's specific medical needs
- **Prevents treatment delays** that can occur when providers must repeatedly seek approval for medically appropriate adjustments to existing medications
- **Protects patients during coverage transitions** by prohibiting plans from limiting or excluding coverage of a medication that has been continuously used

Importantly, SB 964 includes reasonable guardrails that strike the right balance between access and oversight. The bill:

- **Does not apply to opioids or scheduled controlled substances**, maintaining critical protections in the context of substance use and drug diversion concerns
- **Limits dose adjustments to two instances without prior authorization**, ensuring this reform does not create perpetual approval or eliminate utilization review

- **Applies only when a medication has already been approved for a chronic condition or cancer treatment** and continues to be prescribed by the treating provider

These guardrails underscore that the bill has been carefully tailored to address well-documented challenges without undermining appropriate utilization management practices.

California hospitals see firsthand how prior authorization delays can disrupt cancer treatment plans, destabilize chronic disease management, and impose unnecessary stress on patients and families. By allowing limited, clinically appropriate dose adjustments and protecting continuity of therapy, SB 964 promotes patient-centered care while preserving reasonable oversight.

For these reasons, **CHA respectfully requests your “AYE” vote on SB 964.**

Sincerely,



Kalyn Dean
Vice President, State Advocacy

cc: The Honorable Lola Smallwood-Cuevas
The Honorable Members of the Senate Health Committee
Teri Boughton, Principal Consultant, Senate Health Committee
Joe Parra, Health Policy Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus
Elsie Guerrero, Policy Analyst, Office of Senator Lola Smallwood-Cuevas