



**CALIFORNIA
HOSPITAL
ASSOCIATION**

*Providing Leadership in
Health Policy and Advocacy*

February 10, 2020

The Honorable Richard Neal
Chair
Committee on Ways and Means
1102 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin Brady
Ranking Member
Committee on Ways and Means
1139 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Neal and Ranking Member Brady:

The California Hospital Association, on behalf of its more than 400 hospitals and health systems, shares with your committee the goal of protecting patients from surprise medical bills. At a time when patients should be focused on getting well, they should not be burdened with worries about bills or whether their provider is “in-network” or “out-of-network.”

We appreciate the House Ways and Means Committee’s commitment to protect patients and your collaborative efforts to craft the *Consumer Protection Against Surprise Medical Bills*. In addition to protecting patients, we are pleased that the bill encourages providers and payers to continue private negotiations to resolve out-of-network bills. These negotiations are critical to the intricate balance between hospitals and insurers, and to preserving access to care for Californians.

Unfortunately, proposals developed by the other committees of jurisdiction would pay providers a benchmark rate for out-of-network services. Such rate setting does nothing to protect patients and would have long-lasting negative effects on California’s hospitals and the people they care for. In addition to protecting patients from unexpected bills, hospitals also have a duty to safeguard the critical resources needed to meet the needs of their communities, from disaster preparedness to seismic standards compliance and around-the-clock emergency care. It is important that protecting patients from surprise bills does not come at the expense of meeting communities’ access to care. The *Consumer Protection Against Surprise Medical Bills* goes a long way to striking that balance.

We look forward to working with the committee to protect patients and ensure that the interaction between state and federal laws is consistent with this shared goal. The California state Legislature is also considering a variety of proposals during this session, and we hope the outcome of both the state and federal processes will reflect our patients’ best interests.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carmela Coyle".

Carmela Coyle
President & CEO

cc: California Congressional Delegation