

CHA Key Messages

Hospitals Strive to Protect Workers and Care for Communities

Extending workers' compensation presumptions will jeopardize access to care

Hospitals share the goal of protecting injured or ill employees.

- Hospitals value their employees and prioritize their well-being. Without healthy employees, hospitals could not fulfill their mission of care.
- Hospitals comply with Cal/OSHA standards aimed at preventing hazards in the workplace, including — but not limited to — infectious diseases, musculoskeletal injuries, cancers, PTSD, and respiratory illnesses.
- Despite hospitals' best efforts, work-related injuries do occur. When that happens, hospitals accept the vast majority of workers' compensation claims, with a robust appeal process in place for any denied claims.

Senate Bill (SB) 213 would create a presumption for acute care hospital employees, without any evidence of widespread or wrongful denial of benefits for workers injured on the job.

- This bill would establish a presumption for hospital employees who experience any infectious disease, musculoskeletal injury, cancer, PTSD, and respiratory illness such as asthma.
- There is no scientific basis supporting the proposed presumptions. For example, UCSF found that less than 25% of all COVID-19 cases among employees were acquired at work. Similarly, studies by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that MRSA infections among hospital patients are declining, while community-acquired infections for all individuals are on the rise.
- There *is* evidence that the current process works for the health care workers. According to the California Workers' Compensation Institute, health care employers have one of the lowest denial rates of any industry, including public safety. In 2019, denial rates for health care ranged from 7.7% to 9.3%, while public safety/government ranged from 13.8% to 18.3%, and the average range for all sectors was 10.4% to 12.6%.

SB 213 would unnecessarily jeopardize access to care at a time when hospitals are laser-focused on caring for their communities and helping make health care more affordable.

- A presumption in workers' compensation can result in hundreds of thousands of dollars in temporary and permanent disability and medical costs for a single case, with little to no evidence the injury occurred at work.

- These increases in workers' compensation costs will directly and immediately impact hospitals' financial ability to protect access to high-quality care, especially considering that 39% of hospitals already operate in the red.