



January 27, 2022

The Honorable Susan Talamantes Eggman
Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee, Subcommittee No. 3 on Health and Human Services
1021 O St., Suite 8530
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Dr. Joaquin Arambula
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee, Subcommittee No. 1 on Health and Human Services
1021 O St., Room 6240
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC) – Timeliness Standards for Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Follow-Up Appointments (Support)

Dear Senator Eggman and Assembly Member Arambula:

Every day, California hospitals see first-hand the human cost of delaying access to behavioral health care treatment. And while California has led the nation in enforcing the federal Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act and the Patient Protection Affordable Care Act, it is critical that our regulatory agencies have the ongoing resources they need to monitor health plans' adherence to growing expectations and the demand for care to ensure that patients not only receive care but have timely access to services.

Even before the exacerbation of behavioral health needs brought on by the stress and social isolation of COVID-19, the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) found steep gaps between the need for and receipt of care. In a 2017 report, SAMHSA found that only 5% to 10% of California's youth and adults with behavioral health needs received treatment. The importance of *timely* access to treatment is particularly critical for mental health and substance use disorder recovery. Studies show that treatment delays can result in increased use of coercive treatment methods, higher medical comorbidity, increased systemic costs, poorer prognoses overall, and a higher risk of suicide and overdose.

For these reasons, the California Hospital Association and its 400 hospital and health system members support the DMHC fiscal year 2022-23 budget request for additional positions and expenditure authority to address timeliness standards for mental health and substance use disorder follow-up appointments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K Austin Scott", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kathryn Austin Scott
Senior Vice President, State Relations and Advocacy

January 27, 2022

cc: Members, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3
Members, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1
Scott Ogus, Consultant, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3
Andrea Margolis, Consultant, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1
Anthony Archie, Senate Republican Caucus
Eric Dietz, Assembly Republican Caucus
Dr. Mark Ghaly, Secretary, Health and Human Services Agency
Richard Figueroa, Deputy Cabinet Secretary, Office of the Governor
Tam Ma, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Office of the Governor