



January 21, 2022

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

The Honorable Wendy Carrillo
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee, Subcommittee No. 4 on State Administration
1021 O St., Room 5730
Sacramento, CA 95814

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 María Elena Durazo
Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee, Subcommittee No. 5 on Corrections, Public Safety,
Judiciary, Labor and Transportation
1021 O St., Suite 7530
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Support of Investment in the Care Economy Workforce Package

Dear Assembly Members Arambula and Carrillo and Sens. Eggman and Durazo:

California hospitals are facing the worst staffing shortage in memory due to a pandemic that has taken a heavy toll on front-line health care workers. Many staff have reached their breaking point and — despite significant hospital investments in retention incentives, employee mental health, and wellness programs — are choosing to leave health care altogether.

Each year hospitals invest millions of dollars in training California's next generation of health care providers but closing the massive gaps ahead will require additional long- and short-term solutions. The pandemic has delayed education and training for thousands of new health care workers and slowed the already insufficient pipeline of those who would care for Californians now and into the future. A shortage of student openings in nursing and medical school programs has created enormous barriers to entry into the health care workforce, and outdated licensure requirements make it difficult for California to recruit nurses from other states.

Rebuilding California's health care workforce is a top priority for CHA in the coming year; we will be digging deeper and thinking more creatively than ever about how to replenish the ranks at hospitals. As we focus on those solutions, CHA and its 400 hospital and health system members appreciate and support the governor's entire budget proposal of \$1.7 billion over three fiscal years, and in particular the proposals to fund incentives for increasing the state's nurses, social workers, emergency medical technicians (EMTs), and behavioral and community health workers in the following ways:

Comprehensive Nursing Initiative (*Department of Health Care Access and Information*)

A UC San Francisco [study of the state's nursing shortage](#) reports it will take until 2026 to close the state's current nursing gap. Because nurses are directly involved in almost all aspects of hospital quality, including patient care, bedside and medication management, assistance with surgeries and other major operations, data collection/reporting, and more, their role in caring for Californians cannot be overstated. In collaborative partnership with Health Impact, CHA has been actively engaged on behalf of hospitals in the six key areas of nursing workforce preparation and development: K-12 pipeline, prerequisite education, pre-licensure education, upskilling the workforce, retention and well-being, and migration. CHA looks forward to working with California's educational partners and other organizations, to focus on diversifying the educational pipeline in nursing so that new graduates in every community will match the racial/ethnic characteristics of the population residing there. CHA strongly supports the governor's proposed budget allocation of \$270 million to increase the number of registered nurses, licensed vocational nurses, certified nursing assistants, certified nurse midwives, certified medical assistants, family nurse practitioners, and other health professionals.

Health Care Workforce Advancement Fund (*Employment Development Department*)

The Employment Training Panel (ETP) has been one of the crown jewels of California's workforce development system. By bringing employers, trainers, and incumbent workers together, the panel ensures that California's employers are able to fully train and utilize their existing workforce while also ensuring that these training initiatives result in increased wages for employees. This "win-win" model has generated concrete, durable benefits for California's employers and workers for more than 30 years.

Gov. Newsom's proposal to add \$90 million to launch the Healthcare Workforce Advancement Fund will bring the successful ETP process to health care workforce training. By bringing employers and labor together, "upskilling" existing employees, and tracking training results through neutral third parties, the Healthcare Workforce Advancement Fund will begin the important process of ensuring that California's health care workforce is fully utilized and that workers benefit from increased wages.

Workforce Council for Health Care Training (*California Workforce Development Board*)

Not only does California face a severe workforce shortage, but issues of equity and cultural competence remain salient, particularly as California recovers from COVID-19. Moreover, additional research is required to match health care workforce programs of today with the health care workforce needs of tomorrow. By bringing together a broad cross-section of employers, labor, and other important health care stakeholders, the council can accomplish these goals. CHA strongly supports the governor's proposal to reform the Workforce Council for Health Care Training as a necessary step to ensure that we address our health care workforce shortage in a manner that addresses history inequity, ensures that the California health care workforce reflects the California of today and the future, and rests on a foundation of the best and most current research available.

High Road Training Partnerships (*California Workforce Development Board*)

Health care offers Californians solid career paths with upward mobility and economic stability, and each year hospitals invest millions of dollars in training California's next generation of health care providers. The scale of California's health care workforce challenge demands a solution that focuses on equity, economic mobility, and improving pathways into the middle class. Gov. Newsom's proposal to add \$120 million to the High Road Training Partnerships for health care will do just that. Not only will the additional funds create urgently needed training programs for future health care workers, but the program will ensure the funds are targeted for underrepresented communities. This will create a health care workforce that fully reflects the population in California, improving health outcomes and providing new access to high-paying, high-skilled health care professions.

Expanding Social Workers, Psychiatric Resident Program, Opioid Treatment (*Department of Health Care Access and Information*)

Hospitals support investments that build and retain a robust workforce to meet growing demands for mental health and substance use disorder services in California. Now is the time to replenish this vital pipeline because California is on a five-year trajectory toward a substantially inadequate behavioral health workforce. Even before the spike in demand for care brought on by COVID-19, the UCSF Healthforce Center reported that California would likely have 41% fewer psychiatrists and 11% fewer psychologists and other mental health professionals than needed by 2028.

Over the last two years, COVID-19 has exacted a damaging toll on providers. COVID-19-related staff absences and reduced morale are affecting access to and quality of available treatment. An April 2021 poll found that 64% of households with a health care worker said worry and stress caused them to experience at least one adverse effect on their mental health; 78% of psychiatrists reported burnout, and 16% had symptoms of major depression.

The Department of Health Care Access and Information's *Workforce for a Healthy California for All* proposals are a step in the right direction toward building and training the behavioral health workforce, including \$26 million for providers trained to address substance use disorders and improve employment among clients in recovery, \$210 million to support social work training programs and create a new and more diverse pipeline into social work, and \$120 million to create psychiatric training residencies.

Emergency Medical Services Corps (*Employment Development Department*)

CHA supports all efforts to invest and build ladders of opportunity and economic mobility in our state's emergency services health care workforce. The governor's proposed \$60 million investment (\$20 million annually from 2022-23 through 2024-25) in targeted EMT training will create innovative and accessible opportunities to recruit, train, hire, and advance an ethnically and culturally inclusive health and human services workforce, with improved diversity and higher wages.

The program targets youth, especially young people of color across California, building on the Emergency Medical Services Corps Alameda County model, with replication in five to 10 counties throughout the state. A training stipend of \$1,000 a month will allow participants to focus on their training, which will consist of 380 hours of classroom instruction following a pre-course in medical terminology, 20 hours of direct medical treatment and job shadowing, and intensive wraparound support, including case management, mentoring, life coaching, and job readiness.

Community Health Workers *(Department of Health Care Access and Information)*

The governor's proposed \$350 million to recruit, train, and certify 25,000 new community health workers by 2025, in partnership with the Department of Health Care Access and Information and the Department of Health Care Services, will enable hospitals and health systems to explore new models of care, incorporate community health workers into their workforce, extend care beyond the hospital or clinic walls to help bridge gaps in care, expand access to care and, ultimately, improve health outcomes for high-risk patients.

Community health workers, recruited from within their own communities, have been aiding Californians with low incomes for many years with a range of needs, such as helping people with chronic conditions like asthma and diabetes to manage their symptoms and avoid their triggers. They arrange for social services to address clients' needs. During the pandemic, community health workers have emerged as lifelines to many of those who are most impacted.

As the health care professionals at hospitals work tirelessly to help patients get and stay healthy — including helping with the real-life challenges that affect their health, such as job pressures, difficulty paying for medications, food insecurity, or trauma — community health workers are key to helping high-risk patients achieve individualized health goals.

English Language Learners Health Careers/Multilingual Health Initiatives *(Department of Health Care Access and Information)*

California hospitals have developed a deep understanding of those they serve, their specific needs, and their most pressing challenges — and they continually work to better understand the experience of everyone they care for through a variety of initiatives. These efforts include, among many activities, data collection and analysis on race, ethnicity, language preference, and other sociodemographic data, as well as cultural competency training.

Cultural competency — the ability of health care providers to offer services that meet the unique social, cultural, and linguistic needs of their patients — is increased through support of health care-focused vocational pathways for students who are English language learners. In short, the better a patient is represented and understood, the better they can be treated (according to the National Education Association, English language learners are the fastest growing student population, estimated at approximately one-fourth of all students in public school by 2025). CHA supports the governor's budget commitment to increase language and cultural diversity with \$130 million for health careers for English language learners and \$60 million to expand scholarships and loan repayment programs in health care and social work for multilingual applicants.

The shortage of health care professionals in our state is deepening every year and affects every aspect of care for Californians. We have much work ahead to rebuild and replenish the health care workforce, and the governor's proposed investments are a promising start.

Sincerely,



Kathryn Austin Scott
Senior Vice President, State Relations and Advocacy

cc: Richard Figueroa, Deputy Cabinet Secretary, Governor's Office
Dr. Mark Ghaly, Secretary, Health and Human Services Agency
Marko Mijic, Undersecretary, Health and Human Services Agency
Natalie Palugyai, Secretary, Labor and Workforce Development Agency