

## Modernizing California's Hospital Disaster Preparedness Standards — The Future of Care Delivery Hangs in the Balance

### The Issue

One of the most important lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic has been that emergencies often play out in unexpected ways. flexibility and innovation are essential to ensuring people get the lifesaving care they need, when and where they need it.

**The Hospital Disaster Preparedness Plan** leverages the lessons learned during the pandemic, ensuring that patients and communities have access to needed emergency care in the immediate aftermath of an earthquake or other disaster. The plan will make certain that **every hospital building in California is able to withstand a major earthquake**, providing the highest level of protection to patients and health care workers in the nation.

And those **buildings that house emergency care and related support services will be fully operational** after a seismic event.

Importantly, **the plan will make responsible use of finite health care resources**, enabling hospitals to **prioritize investments in critical areas like rebuilding a depleted health care workforce, additional patient care services, and community programs** that are vital not only for disaster response, but for the future health and well-being of every Californian. The ability to recruit and retain caregivers is of particular importance, as hospitals and other providers face severe workforce shortages. And, investments in new life-saving technologies, expanded outpatient facilities, and advanced digital care capabilities are all essential building blocks for the health care delivery system of tomorrow.

The Hospital Disaster Preparedness Plan **will both maximize hospital emergency care** so it is readily available in the aftermath of the next disaster and **support investments in a health care system that delivers high-quality, equitable care for all.**

### What's Needed

**State legislators must support the Hospital Disaster Preparedness Plan.** The plan will:

- Continue to ensure all hospital buildings are structurally safe and able to withstand a major earthquake

### Building the delivery system of tomorrow



#### Community priorities hospitals in California would like to invest in:

- Workforce training and retention programs for nurses and allied health professionals
- Expansion of behavioral health prevention and treatment programs
- Digital infrastructure to support telehealth and other remote care capabilities
- Expansion of outpatient and ambulatory care services
- Collaborative initiatives to reduce health disparities among diverse populations

- Strengthen all hospital buildings that house emergency medical services so that even immediately following a seismic event they can continue to provide necessary emergent medical care to their communities
- Provide additional time for hospitals that can secure these resources to do so, and complete lengthy design and construction processes

Additionally, policymakers must explore opportunities for **updating and streamlining regulatory requirements** to make it possible for health care providers to **respond even more quickly to a disaster**. The pandemic has shown that when state departments are able to act swiftly, the health care delivery system can increase its capacity to care for additional patients in need of medical care.