



March 24, 2023

The Honorable Mike Fong
Chair, Assembly Higher Education Committee
1021 O Street, Room 5230
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUBJECT: AB 689 (Carrillo) — SPONSOR

Dear Assembly Member Fong:

California is in the midst of a health care workforce crisis. Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, California faced a fundamental shortage of trained health care employees. For example, in January 2020, Futuro Health *conservatively* estimated a shortage of 500,000 allied health employees by 2024. In the aftermath of the pandemic, this workforce shortage has only grown worse. And it is not limited to the allied health professions. According to a recent study by UCSF, California had a deficit of *40,000 registered nurses* in 2021, and that number has likely only grown.

These shortages disproportionately impact disadvantaged communities, particularly in rural areas and in the Central Valley. Fortunately, there are potential solutions to the state's health care workforce crisis. One of the most promising areas is in training incumbent workers, which would enable the existing workforce to advance in their careers to earn a higher wage. In health care, this could include training a licensed vocational nurse to become a registered nurse or training an orderly to become a phlebotomist.

However, there are fundamental barriers to health care workers accessing appropriate training. **This is why — in the face of such a profound crisis — the California Hospital Association and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) have come together to co-sponsor Assembly Bill (AB) 689, which would address some of the challenges. First, AB 689 would provide health care employees with priority registration when enrolling in community college courses. This would ensure that health care workers have access to the courses they need. Second, AB 689 would require that community colleges set aside at least 15% of the slots in their impacted courses for health care workers, ensuring they have full access to the impacted courses that will assist them in their training.**

Because many health care workers already have commitments on the job as well as personal responsibilities that necessitate juggling multiple responsibilities, community colleges are the simplest and most affordable way to access academic prerequisites and training programs. Unfortunately, community college classes and programs are generally impacted, or there is more student demand than available space, and this places health care workers at a disadvantage. Not only are they limited in what courses they can sign up for due to their work schedules, but the seats that are available are apportioned

by either a “first come, first served” or lottery system. Neither option assists health care workers in receiving the training they need to increase their earnings or career options. Eliminating these barriers to training would result in a “win-win” situation — the community receives an additional trained health care worker, and the employee sees increased wages for an in-demand field.

In conclusion, CHA and its more than 400 hospital and health system members, and SEIU and its more than 700,000 members, thank Assembly Member Wendy Carrillo for her leadership on this important issue, and we ask for an “AYE” vote on AB 689.

Sincerely,



Vanessa Gonzalez
Vice President, State Advocacy
California Hospital Association



Matt Lege
Government Relations Advocate
SEIU California

cc: Members of the Assembly Higher Education Committee
Ellen Cesaretti-Monroy, Consultant, Assembly Higher Education Committee
Lyndsay Mitchell, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus