



July 31, 2023

The Honorable Anthony Portantino  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
State Capitol, Room 412  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**SUBJECT: AB 689 (Carrillo) — SPONSOR**

Dear Senator Portantino:

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 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 that keep health care workers from 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 help train more incumbent health care employees through the community college system.**

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 — 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” basis or a 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.

With the scale and scope of the health care workforce crisis, California must have creative solutions. AB 689 is an essential and practical step to address California’s health care workforce needs, modeled on previous efforts such as AB 2881 (Berman, 2022), which had costs for implementation in the range of \$49,000-\$2.9 million. Given that the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s office is already developing tools to provide priority registration to veterans and parents, these costs will be modest and absorbable.

In conclusion, CHA and its more than 400 hospital and health system members, as well as SEIU and its more than 700,000 members, thank Assembly Member Wendy Carrillo for her leadership on this important issue. 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: The Honorable Wendy Carrillo  
The Honorable Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee  
Lenin Del Castillo, Consultant, Senate Appropriations Committee  
Amanda Richie, Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus