



March 13, 2024

The Honorable Richard Roth
Chair, Senate Health Committee
1021 O St., Room 1200
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUBJECT: SB 999 (Cortese) – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Roth:

California's hospitals see firsthand the devastating impact of a lack of timely access to effective treatment for mental health and substance use disorders. When medically necessary care is not covered, individuals with mental health and substance use disorders often have their conditions worsen, leading to unnecessary, harmful, and costly hospitalizations or emergency department visits. These delays in authorization also lead to extended hospital stays as patients are delayed in their ability to access the post-acute or community-based services they need to transition to a community setting or residential care facility.

On behalf of our more than 400 hospital and health system members, the California Hospital Association (CHA) is writing to express support for Senate Bill (SB) 999, which would require a health care service plan, a disability insurer, and an entity acting on a plan's or insurer's behalf to ensure compliance with specific requirements for utilization review, which includes that determinations be made by a health care provider practicing in the relevant specialty, that adequate access be maintained for prior authorization requests, and in the case of denials, that disclosure be provided on the basis for the denial.

This measure is urgently needed to address the current crisis in our state. Patients need timely access to care to achieve and maintain an optimal outcome. Physicians who treat patients with mental health and substance use disorders must be able to select and implement the most effective treatment plan and care setting, without the unnecessary barriers and delays that occur with a requirement for prior authorization.

For these reasons, CHA requests your "AYE" vote on SB 999.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rony Berdugo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Rony Berdugo,
Vice President, State Advocacy

cc: The Honorable Dave Cortese
The Honorable Members of the Senate Health Committee
Teri Boughton, Consultant Senate Health Committee
Joe Parra, Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus