

June 29, 2021



Representing California's Catholic
Health Systems and Hospitals

The Honorable Dr. Jim Wood
Chair, Assembly Health Committee
State Capitol, Room 6005
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUBJECT: SB 637 (Newman) – Oppose, unless amended

Dear Assembly Member Wood:

The Alliance of Catholic Health Care, which represents California's Catholic-affiliated health systems and hospitals, must oppose SB 637 (Newman). Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, our hospitals have partnered with local, state, and federal public health officials to care for patients with COVID-19 across the state. This has included robust reporting, all toward the goal of an effective response during this public health emergency. By contrast, key provisions in SB 637 diverge from the emergency response approach that has been the cornerstone of the partnership between public health and the health care delivery system during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As such, the Alliance must oppose the bill as it is written — unless it is amended to focus on improving care for the patients and communities our members serve — and requests the following amendments:

Apply Bill's Provisions Only During Statewide Health-Related Emergencies

The bill requires weekly reporting during health-related states of emergency, and monthly at all other times. We urge that the bill be limited to reporting during statewide health-related emergencies, which would exclude regional health-related emergencies that would otherwise trigger reporting in parts of the state unaffected by the emergency. During a health-related emergency, hospitals need to focus on caring for patients, so instead of requiring weekly reporting, monthly reporting would be sufficient so that hospitals can concentrate their efforts on patient care. The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) can, as it has during the COVID-19 state of emergency, require reporting more frequently if needed.

Focus New Requirement to Report Hospital Personnel Decisions to Layoffs and Furloughs

Another provision we are concerned about is a new requirement for hospitals to report all layoffs, furloughs, and repeated canceled shifts to CDPH for public posting. We request removing the reporting requirement for repeated canceled shifts, but retaining reporting on layoffs and furloughs. Staffing is a dynamic area, which makes tracking repeated canceled shifts an immensely challenging task. Given limited utility to CDPH and the public information on shifts that have been canceled, focusing this new data collection on the more discrete layoff and furlough data, which could potentially provide more relevant information about the workforce capacity of a hospital, would be appropriate.

The Honorable Jim Wood

July 1, 2021

Page 2

Sunset of January 1, 2025, Needed for All Provisions of Bill

We request that the bill be amended to sunset *all* of the bill's reporting provisions on January 1, 2025. One consistent sunset is appropriate for the Legislature to reassess this COVID-19-related legislation. That review would take place in three years in 2024, when we will have the benefit of 2022 and 2023 data.

Collect Data on Staff Who Contracted COVID-19 Recently, Not Since Beginning of Pandemic

We request that the bill be amended to revise the reporting of the number of staff who have tested COVID-19 positive since the last reporting period instead of in total, which would be since January 2020. That would reflect the winter and other health care surges, as opposed to whatever the more current data are about cases of COVID-19 among staff.

Paper Printing Requirement Is Outdated; Online or Electronic Options Needed

Finally, SB 637 requires printing and publicly posting all CDPH-approved program flexibility requests. We urge the Legislature to give hospitals the option to either print them **or** post them to the hospital's website. CDPH, like many organizations and businesses, is shifting to *paperless* processes, so should this legislation allow an electronic posting option for hospitals.

For these reasons, we must oppose SB 637 (Newman).

Sincerely,



Lori Cappello Dangberg
Vice President

Cc: The Honorable Josh Newman
The Honorable Members of Assembly Health Committee