

September 2, 2021

Assembly Floor Alert SB 637 (Newman), as to be amended – Oppose



*Representing California's Catholic
Health Systems and Hospitals*

The Alliance of Catholic Health Care, which represents California's Catholic-affiliated health systems and hospitals, opposes SB 637 (Newman), as it is to be amended, and urges your no vote.

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.

This bill would require hospitals to report additional data including all layoffs, furloughs, and repeated canceled shifts to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) for public posting. CDPH has requested substantial data from our hospitals during the COVID-19 pandemic on a wide range of aspects, including patient volumes, bed availability, and more. The data included in this bill on personnel decisions are not among them. If CDPH needed to collect these data to support its response to this pandemic, it would be doing so already.

We and the California Hospital Association have requested removing reporting of repeated canceled shifts. With recent amendments taken in the Assembly Health Committee, hospitals will be required to report even more information related to canceled shifts — unit information and reasons for the cancellations. Staffing hospitals 24/7 based on ever changing numbers of patients is a dynamic area, which makes tracking repeated canceled shifts an immensely challenging task. It will directly add to a cost of care without benefiting or improving patient care. CHA has estimated these costs at \$100,000 per hospital, equating to costs of \$40 million statewide.

The Assembly Health Committee analysis noted that, according to CDPH, “the data required by this bill would not likely assist CDPH in determining if ratios or program flexibility requirements are being met.” Given the lack of utility of information on layoffs, furloughs, and repeated canceled shifts to CDPH and the public, this bill should be rejected.

Because SB 637 shows no clear benefit to the patients and communities our members serve, we respectfully urge your “NO” vote.