



Senator Sydney K. Kamlager, District 30

AB 369 - Street Medicine Act: Bringing Care to the Street

IN BRIEF

AB 369 increases access to health and social services for people experiencing homelessness (PEH) by allowing for care to be provided outside the walls of a traditional medical clinic, including through street medicine, shelter-based care, and within transitional housing. Providing direct, comprehensive care to PEH wherever they reside—whether on the street or under a bridge—will improve the health outcomes and lives of California’s homeless population.

BACKGROUND & PROBLEM

California has the largest homeless population in the country. Over 151,000 people in the state are homeless, 72% of which are chronically unsheltered. In Los Angeles County alone, nearly 59,000 people are homeless—higher than any city in the country.

PEH have higher rates of chronic physical health conditions and behavioral health needs compared to the general population. A recent study found that 80% of unsheltered women reported abuse and trauma as the cause of their transiency. Despite their complex care needs, PEH have less access to preventive, primary, and specialty health care services. On average, PEH have life expectancies 30 years shorter than their housed peers.

Enrolling PEH in Medi-Cal has been a recent strategy to address existing health disparities; however, even when insured, 73% have never seen their healthcare provider. Concerns for basic survival, transportation, lack of a mailing address, lack of ID and mental illness make it difficult, if not impossible, for PEH to access care in traditional health care settings.

Without access to primary care, PEH overutilize hospital emergency rooms, where they often present with multiple advanced conditions. This leads to increased rates of hospitalization and readmission. PEH have 740% more hospital days at 170% greater cost per day than

people who are housed, and state Medi-Cal dollars pay the bill.

SOLUTION

California’s health care infrastructure does not meet the unique needs and circumstances of our homeless population. Rather than asking PEH to overcome the challenges of accessing care in medical facilities, providers must be able to care for their patients wherever they may reside. Successful delivery models, including mobile clinics and street medicine programs, exist. These programs provide medical and behavioral care, treatment for substance use disorders, enrollment in social services, and assistance with housing transitions.

Street medicine programs improve health outcomes and increase housing placement by facilitating consistent care from providers who witness the unique environmental factors that PEH face. Street medicine has been shown to reduce avoidable, expensive hospital admissions by 2/3, and to reduce the duration of hospitalization. Expanding such programs would result in significant cost savings for the state. Despite these benefits, Medi-Cal does not recognize the “street” as a location for providing care. As a result, PEH are denied medical treatment, social services, and other Medi-Cal benefits.

AB 369 removes barriers to care by: (1) Extending Medi-Cal presumptive eligibility to PEH; (2) Allowing PEH to receive Medi-Cal services and referrals from all licensed primary care providers regardless of empanelment; (3) Removing the ID requirement for PEH seeking care; and (4) Allowing PEH to receive comprehensive Medi-Cal benefits outside the walls of a traditional medical setting.

AUTHOR SPONSOR

Senator Kamlager

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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LIST OF SUPPORTERS

1. AIDS Healthcare Foundation
2. AltaMed Health Services: (Verified >)
3. American Academy of Pediatrics, CA
4. American College of Emergency Physicians, CA
5. American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), AFL-CIO
6. Anti-Police Terror Project (APTP)
7. BIENESTAR Human Services
8. Cal Voices
9. California Academy of Family Physicians
10. California Academy of Physician Assistants
11. California Access Coalition
12. California Association for Nurse Practitioners
13. California Association of Alcohol and Drug Program Executives
14. California Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems
15. California Association of Social Rehabilitation Agencies
16. California Association of Veteran Service Agencies
17. California Chronic Care Coalition
18. California Consortium of Addiction Programs and Professionals
19. California Hospital Association
20. California Life Sciences Association
21. California Medical Association
22. California Pharmacists Association
23. California State Treasurer, Fiona Ma
24. Chapman University PA Program
25. City and County of San Francisco
26. City of Culver City
27. City of Santa Monica
28. Clinic Sierra Vista
29. Coastal Street Medicine
30. Corporation for Supportive Housing California
31. Councilman Mike Bonin
32. County Behavioral Health Director Association of California
33. County Health Executives Association of California
34. County of Kern
35. Covenant House
36. Disability Rights California
37. Downtown Women's Center
38. Dr. Deborah Deas, Dean of UCR Medical School
39. Father Joe's Village Clinic
40. Good RX
41. Health Net
42. Housing California
43. Kaweah Delta Street Medicine Program
44. Keck Graduate Institute
45. Keck Medicine of University of Southern California
46. Los Angeles Christian Health Center
47. Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
48. Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority
49. Mayor Eric Garcetti, City of Los Angeles
50. National Alliance to End Homelessness
51. National Association of Social Workers, California Chapter
52. National Health Care for the Homeless Council
53. National Health Law Program
54. PATH
55. People Assisting the Homeless
56. Rafalski Enterprises
57. Sacramento Street Medicine
58. San Francisco Community Health Center
59. SELAH Neighborhood Homeless Coalition
60. Skid Row Housing Trust
61. Street Medicine Institute
62. Street Medicine Institute Student Coalition
63. Student Run Homeless Clinics
64. Student Run Homeless Clinics, UCLA Department of Family Medicine
65. Union Station Homeless Service
66. United States Veterans' Artists Alliance
67. United Way of Greater Los Angeles
68. University of California
69. University of Southern California
70. Valley Homeless Healthcare
71. Western Center on Law and Poverty