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May 28, 2024

The Honorable Angelique Ashby, Chair
Senate Business, Professions and Economic Development Committee
1021 O Street, Room 3320
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 2860 (Garcia) – Licensed Physicians and Dentists from Mexico programs – SUPPORT

Dear Chair Ashby,

Local Health Plans of California (“LHPC”) writes to express our support for Assembly Bill 2860 (Garcia), which would remove the pilot status of the Licensed Physicians and Dentists from Mexico Program and expand the overall scope of the program. As the statewide trade association representing all 17 of California’s non-for-profit and community-based health plans, which collectively cover 70% of the state’s Medi-Cal managed care enrollees or nearly 9.3 million Californians, LHPC understands the importance of expanding upon the number of providers in the Medi-Cal program that reflect the diversity of Medi-Cal members. The shortage of culturally and linguistically competent medical providers in California exacerbates access to care issues in non-English dominant communities. The Licensed Physicians and Dentists from Mexico Program is one important tool to ensure that the Medi-Cal provider community is more reflective of the communities that they serve.

The physician shortage has reached a critical stage in the United States and, particularly, in California. The Association of American Medical Colleges projects that the United States could see an estimated shortage of up to 124,000 physicians by 2034, including major shortages in primary and specialty care. This is of particular concern for the Latinx community in California. The Latinx community comprises 40% of the state’s population but only seven percent of all physicians. This lack of physician diversity is not only an issue within the profession but exacerbates disparities for hard-to-reach Latinx communities.

While California must do more to address the physician shortage, AB 2860 takes one approach to temporarily resolve the issue. The bill seeks to expand the existing program, over 15 years, to bring nearly 1000 physicians to California on one-time, three-year licenses. These physicians would join community health centers and clinics throughout the state to serve populations of need, focusing primarily on migrant farmworker, underserved Latinx and rural communities.

Local health plans are committed to working with participating community health centers and the Licensed Physicians and Dentists from Mexico Program to bring culturally and linguistically competent physicians to communities in need. For all these reasons LHPC strongly supports AB 2860 (Garcia) and respectfully requests your 'aye' vote on this critical legislation.

Sincerely,

Katie Andrew

Katie Andrew
Director of Government Affairs
Local Health Plans of California

cc:

Assemblymember Garcia
Members, Senate Business, Professions and Economic Development
Committee