

# Assembly Bill 899: Streamlining Expansion of Primary Care Facilities

## Assemblymember Jim Wood



### OVERVIEW

Today, roughly 1,330 community health centers (CHCs) in California provide high-quality comprehensive care to 6.9 million people – that’s 1 in 6 Californians. For decades, community health centers have provided care to everyone who walks through their door, regardless of their ability to pay, their immigration status, or their individual circumstances. Community health centers provide the full spectrum of care, from primary care to dental to behavioral health care.

### GROWING DEMAND FOR SERVICES

Following the passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and the corresponding Medi-Cal expansion in California, millions of Californians gained access to health coverage, many for the very first time. More than 1/3 of Californians are Medi-Cal beneficiaries and that number will undoubtedly increase as the Legislature and the Governor consider proposals that seek to provide greater access to healthcare.

Community health centers (CHCs) are a top choice among Medi-Cal beneficiaries. When the ACA was implemented, over 54% of Medi-Cal beneficiaries selected a CHC as their primary care medical home.

While expansion of coverage is instrumental to driving down overall health care costs and improving the health of Californians with the greatest need, it has substantially increased the demand for services and the commensurate need to expand facilities to accommodate that demand. Compounding the situation in Medi-Cal specifically is the closure and consolidation of many small and private physician practices, further limiting access for patients in communities throughout the state.

### THE PROBLEM

In order to effectively meet growing patient demand for services, CHCs are working to increase access where patients need it most. Purchasing existing health care facilities is the most efficient manner in which to meet the demand. However, currently there are regulatory barriers that prevent CHC operations from expanding their services through the acquisition of existing health care facilities.

### THE SOLUTION

AB 899 (Wood) will maximize the ability of CHCs to expand access to health care for all Californians, by giving them the option to repurpose existing outpatient clinics or previously licensed primary care clinics to meet the growing demand for services. In addition, this bill will also ensure that the Community Clinics Advisory Committee is empaneled and operating by 2020 to provide guidance and assistance to the regulators about the most appropriate function and operation of CHCs.

As California continues to move toward universal coverage for all residents, it is imperative that the system is prepared to meet the access needs of newly insured patients. This bill will ensure that CHCs are empowered to expand services in a manner that is timely and consistent with their mission of community-centered and community-driven health care.

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### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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