



March 2, 2021

The Honorable Richard Pan, M.D.  
Chair, Senate Health Committee  
State Capitol, Room 2191  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: SB 316 (Eggman) – SUPPORT**

Dear Senator Pan:

On behalf of [Health Center Partners of Southern California](#) and its 17-member primary care organizations, which together serve more than 917,000 patients each year, for 3.9 million patient visits each year, at 160 practice sites across San Diego, Riverside, and Imperial counties, **I urge you to support SB 316 (Eggman), which will soon be heard by your committee.**

Long before COVID-19, the prevalence of behavioral health issues among adults was steadily increasing. The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly exacerbated this trend amongst adults and children alike. **According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, during the pandemic about [4 in 10](#) adults in the U.S. have reported symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder.** By comparison, [one in ten](#) adults reported these symptoms from January to June 2019.<sup>1</sup> This data clearly illustrates the importance of having access to behavioral health services. SB 316 helps to achieve this goal.

**Currently, Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and Rural Health Centers (RHCs) may NOT bill for a behavioral health visit and a physical health visit for the same patient within a 24-hour period.** This restriction creates significant access barriers. Patients don't always have the time, transportation, or opportunity to leave work again for a second visit with a provider. Patients, especially those who are Black, Indigenous or people of color, are swayed by cultural norms and stigma around receiving behavioral health care. This leads some to believe behavioral health visits are less important and not needed, making it unlikely the patient will return for their behavioral health visit.

The current same-day billing restriction undermines a Community Health Center's (CHC) ability to provide or expand behavioral health services, which are in even greater demand because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **SB 316 will ensure CHCs are truly integrated health care settings and will be compensated fairly for the care they provide.**
- **SB 316 will require the state to allow FQHCs and RHCs to bill Medi-Cal for two visits in one day if a patient is provided behavioral health services on the same day he or she receives other medical services.**

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<sup>1</sup> Nirmita Panchal, Rabah Kamal, Cynthia Cox, and Rachel Garfield. The Implications of COVID-19 for Mental Health and Substance Use. Published February 10, 2021. <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/the-implications-of-covid-19-for-mental-health-and-substance-use/>.



All Californians deserve access to timely quality behavioral health care. **I firmly support SB 316 (Eggman) and respectfully request your aye vote when it comes before you in committee.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Henry N. Tuttle".

Henry N. Tuttle  
President and CEO

Cc: Members, Senate Health Committee  
Senator Eggman

[Health Center Partners of Southern California](#), a family of companies, includes a 17-membership organization of federally qualified health centers, Indian Health Services Organizations, both urban and sovereign, and Planned Parenthood of the Pacific Southwest, collectively serving 917,000 patients each year, for 3.9 million patient visits each year, at 160 practice sites across San Diego, Riverside seventh largest provider group in the region. [Read our latest Impact Report.](#)