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June 30, 2015

Karen L. Smith, MD, MPH, Director
California Department of Public Health
1615 Capitol Avenue, Suite 73.720
PO Box 997377, MS 0500
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RE: AB 858 (Wood): Medi-Cal: Federally qualified health centers & rural health clinics (Support)

Dear Dr. Smith:

The California Conference of Local Health Officers (CCLHO) Board voted to take a support recommendation for AB 858 (Wood), a bill that would allow providers to be reimbursed by Medi-Cal for up to two visits taking place the same day at a federally qualified health center (FQHC) or rural health clinic (RHC), thereby allowing providers to be reimbursed for a mental health visit on the same day as a primary care visit. CCLHO urges the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to also support this legislation.

Allowing for multiple reimbursements in one day for a mental health visit on the same day as a primary care visit has great potential for improving health outcomes through better care coordination. It is very convenient for patients and allows for warm hand-offs between primary care and mental health providers. Same day visits are critical, especially in populations/cultures where mental illness is typically highly stigmatized and individuals are reluctant to accept a referral to mental health. Patients have been shown to be more likely to show up to both appointments, even if they value one over the other.

The current restriction on multiple visits is a major stumbling block to implementing evidence-based approaches to integrating mental health into primary care in FQHCs and RHCs. Same day visits within FQHCs and RHCs encourage better communication and care coordination between primary care and mental health providers. They improve the ability of providers to meet the needs all patients, especially those with "serious" mental illness, within the primary care environment with same-day mental health support.

As you know, CCLHO is an organization of all legally appointed physician health officers in California's 61 city and county jurisdictions established in statute in 1947 to consult with, advise, and make recommendations to CDPH, other departments, boards, commissions and officials of federal, state, and local government, the Legislature, and any other organization or association on matters affecting health.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have questions, please contact me at Muntu.davis@acgov.org or 510-267-8010.

Sincerely,

Muntu Davis, MD, MPH
President, California Conference of Local Health Officers

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