

## Statement on SB 379 (Wiener) Impacting the Continuation of UC Health Partnerships with Catholic Health Systems

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*SB 379 (Wiener), if enacted, could unravel much of the health care “safety net” that addresses health inequities impacting thousands of Californians across the State. Now – in the midst of a COVID pandemic especially afflicting our most vulnerable residents – is the very worst time to be considering the dissolution of decades-old partnerships between the UC and California’s Catholic faith-based providers, that provide access to health care for those who – because of race, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, rural location, income and other socioeconomic “underlying conditions” – would otherwise go unserved.*

### 1) These Partnerships are at the Heart of California’s Health Safety Net.

**Decades-old partnerships between Catholic health care providers and secular academic health centers such as UC Health, are at the core of California’s public health care safety net. They are essential to improving and expanding access to quality health care services across our State – especially so for underserved communities and for those at the margins of society.**

- Alliance member Dignity Health and UC Health are the #1 and #2 Medi-Cal providers, respectively. Agreements between them are key to caring for this population: providing timely care, alleviating capacity and conserving scarce financial resources.

#### **They Often Provide the ONLY LOCALLY AVAILABLE CARE of its Kind.**

- In Los Angeles, UCLA specialists provide **the ONLY locally available pediatric-trauma services in the San Fernando Valley** at Northridge Hospital. Launched in 2010, this Level II Pediatric Trauma Center provides immediate care for infants, children and adolescents with life-threatening traumatic injuries 24/7. Traumatic injuries are the leading cause of death and disability in children – making immediate, life-saving medical care crucial. Care at a trauma center lowers the risk of death by 25 percent compared to non-trauma centers. The Center has coverage by more than 20 subspecialty physicians 24-hours-a-day; and, technologically-advanced equipment to effectively resuscitate young patients regardless of age or body size. In 2019 alone, the program treated 700 patients.
- The San Fernando Valley’s **ONLY radiation oncology treatment center** is a partnership between UCLA and Northridge Hospital. It served 8,500 patients in FY19.
- In Los Angeles County, UCLA specialists provide call coverage at Providence Saint John’s Health Center for **pediatric and neonatal surgery, interventional cardiology, and inpatient psychiatry.**
- Providence Little Company of Mary Medical Center in San Pedro partners with UCLA to provide their patients with **post-transplant care** in its sub-acute center.

- In partnership with UCLA, Providence Saint John's Health Center operates the Cleft Palate Center, a nationally recognized program that **provides surgical services to children with cleft lip and craniofacial abnormalities.**
- UC Davis and Mercy Medical Center Merced jointly run a cancer center providing treatment for more than 12,000 patients annually – **the ONLY cancer center of its kind in the region.**
- In partnership with UCSF, St. Mary's Medical Center offers **the ONLY inpatient adolescent psychiatry program in San Francisco**, seeing more than 1,000 patients in FY19.
- St. Joseph's Medical Center in Stockton partners with UCSF to give patients **access to cancer clinical trials that would otherwise be out of reach.**
- Clinical education, fellowships, and residency programs for **physician, nursing, physician assistant, physical therapy, and paramedic students** at Providence hospitals in Humboldt, Sonoma, Napa, Los Angeles, and Orange counties.
- In Sonoma County, UCSF specialists help **provide care for fragile, critically ill newborns** at Providence Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital. Through this partnership, Providence has direct access to the resources of one of the finest intensive care nurseries in the world and can **perform specialized procedures in Santa Rosa that would otherwise require a trip to San Francisco.**
- In Napa County, UCSF neurosurgeons perform **cranial and spinal surgery** at Providence Queen of the Valley Medical Center's Peggy Herman Neurosciences Center.

**In this pandemic, these Partnerships are More Vital Than Ever.**

**Every year, these relationships support programs that serve tens of thousands of Californians. Right now, they are an indispensable element of California's battle against the pandemic and protect its most vulnerable residents from it. At a time when COVID-19 is placing unprecedented demands on our State's health care providers, any effort to weaken that safety net would only harm the state's most vulnerable residents. Now, more than ever, is the time to sustain these community connections to ensure that all persons in our state have access to life saving care.**

**From COVID-19 testing to treatment to vaccination, these partnerships have efficiently leveraged scarce front-line medical, bed-capacity, PPE, testing and vaccine resources.**

- Dignity Health's Saint Francis Memorial Hospital and UCSF Health have worked together to **open San Francisco's first dedicated unit to care for COVID-19 patients.** The unit is staffed by physicians from both Dignity Health and UCSF Health and care for up to 48 patients at a time.
- In January, Dignity Health partnered with UCSF **on the city's first large-scale community vaccination event** at City College of San Francisco. UCSF and Dignity Health partnered with the City and County of San Francisco to open the city's first dedicated COVID-19 unit at Saint Francis Memorial Hospital.
- Mercy Medical Center Merced and UC Merced are **partnering on community vaccine clinics to vaccinate over 2,500 people;** and additional clinics are planned.

- Sacramento County's Department of Public Health in partnership with Dignity Health and UC Davis Health **hosted a community-based COVID-19 vaccination clinic** this month.

## **2) Catholic Health Care is Dedicated to Serving the LGBTQ Community.**

**Let us take this opportunity to affirm our commitment to equitable, knowledgeable and welcoming care for LGBTQ patients and their families. They have too often faced discrimination in health care, and our members are committed to nondiscrimination in the compassionate care they offer all Californians.**

- Catholic health providers serve all patients regardless of their background, sexual orientation, or gender identity - providing care for gay and transgender patients every day at its hospitals and clinics across the State.
- Catholic hospitals offer primary, specialty and urgent care for transgender patients, including hormone therapy, breast augmentation or reduction, and facial feminization or masculinization.
- Catholic hospitals provide PrEP and PEP HIV prevention treatment in our health facilities and physician offices – some of our hospitals follow the UCSF guidelines.
- Several Catholic hospitals in California are Healthcare Equality Index (HEI) certified.
- Dignity Health operates one of the only specialty transgender care centers in San Francisco, the Gender Institute at Saint Francis Memorial Hospital.
- Catholic hospitals were among the first to offer services in response to the AIDS crises in the 1980s when few others did – often in partnership with public health agencies in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Sacramento and other counties.
- St. Mary's Medical Center in San Francisco has been providing compassionate, groundbreaking outpatient care to HIV patients since the AIDS epidemic devastated the city in the early 1980s. A UCSF specialist leads the clinic.

## **3) We hear and understand the concerns raised about these relationships.**

Contrary to what has been alleged:

- Our members expect all clinicians practicing at our facilities at all times to provide services in accordance with their professional judgment and the needs and wishes of their patients.
- We also expect every clinician to inform patients of all their health care options; and to refer and/or transfer a patient to another provider if a certain service is not offered.
- Our members provide the standard of care for pregnancy complications, including ectopic pregnancies. Emergent and urgent care is always provided.
- Our health facilities provide compassionate care to victims of sexual assault, including the provision of emergency contraception.

- While Catholic hospitals do not perform every procedure, the services we do provide are provided to all members of the community without discrimination.
- Procedures that have the sole purpose of sterilization are not permitted for any patient, without regard to sex or gender identity.

In the decades we have been working together to provide services, we are not aware of any instance in which a patient did not receive the care they needed, or where a clinician was constrained in providing care. Nonetheless, our members and UC have worked to amend our contracts and agreements to allay any such concerns.

## Conclusion

The mission of Catholic health care is to provide access to care for those who need it the most. **All across California, Catholic health care providers are partnering with others like UC Health to deliver care to patients that other providers don't or won't serve, with services other providers don't or won't offer, in parts of the state where other providers don't or won't have a presence.** Dissolving these partnerships would disenfranchise health care access for millions of health inequity-impacted Californians, doing an enormous disservice to our State's goal of expanding health care access for the underserved.

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*The Alliance of Catholic Health Care strengthens the Catholic health care ministry in California by providing a statewide forum in which ministry leaders collaborate on advocacy, ministry leadership formation, Church relations and other issues that enhance the common good; and advocates to preserve the ability of Catholic and other religious organizations to deliver health care consistent with their religious beliefs and values.*