

ATTACHMENT

For Item

#15

Tuesday,
July 16,
2024

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION RECEIVED BY THE CLERK
OF THE BOARD

July 16, 2024

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of San Diego
1600 Pacific Highway, Suite 335
San Diego, CA 92101

Re: Letter of Support for Increasing Medi-Cal Reimbursement Rates to Improve
Healthcare for Nearly 1 Million San Diegans

Dear Chair Vargas, Vice Chair Lawson-Remer, and Honorable Board of Supervisors,

I am writing to express Legal Aid Society of San Diego's strong support for the County's current efforts to ensure every San Diegan has access to the healthcare they need to live healthy and fulfilling lives.

The Legal Aid Society of San Diego ("LASSD") which began as the "Office of the Public Attorney" in 1919 and was later incorporated under its current name in 1953, has been providing free legal services to indigent people throughout San Diego County for more than 100 years. LASSD's mission is to improve lives by advancing justice through effective, efficient, and vigorous legal advocacy, outreach, and education. We strive to redress our clients' legal issues and empower them to effectively participate in our legal, governmental, and social systems. We are the largest poverty law firm in San Diego County, with teams specializing in a number of priority areas including health care access and advocacy, housing, government benefits, and consumer protection, to name a few. LASSD, through its Consumer Center on Health Education and Advocacy (CCHCA) and as the coordinating agency for the statewide Health Consumer Alliance, has a keen awareness of the direct impacts on patients when needed care is delayed. Our health advocates help Medi-Cal patients overcome a variety of challenges to accessing needed care.

Access to health services is essential for the County to achieve its goal of providing responsive support to our children, seniors, unsheltered residents, and those struggling with mental health and/or substance use disorders. We believe San Diego can become a county where all San Diegans can receive the full spectrum of quality care and treatment they deserve throughout their journey to better health and wellness. Whether that be acute care for a teen with suicidal ideations or a hip replacement for an unsheltered senior, our region is now on a course to be able to deliver the breadth and depth of services this community needs.

We applaud Vice Chair Lawson-Remer and Supervisor Montgomery Steppe for prioritizing this issue and earning your Board's unanimous support. The Board's initial action in March 2024 was a crucial first step to address the growing challenges preventing the provision of timely, adequate, and equitable healthcare services in our region. Today's item, and accompanying progress report, affirm the County's commitment to finding solutions.

Medi-Cal is a vital program that ensures low-income individuals and families have access to healthcare services. However, given escalating costs and growth in San Diego's Medi-Cal population, beneficiaries and providers are feeling the negative effects of low reimbursement rates. Beneficiaries have limited and delayed access to services, while healthcare providers are experiencing increasing workloads and burnout as fewer and fewer providers are willing to accept low reimbursement rates. The critical need for innovation and leadership on this issue is paramount.

We appreciate the County's thoughtful approach to leverage internal and external experts in the analysis and evaluation of San Diego's Medi-Cal Landscape. As members of the Medicaid Taskforce, we are grateful to be able to contribute our direct experience and to be part of the solution. By comprehensively evaluating existing obstacles, crafting innovative policies, and providing dynamic leadership, the entire San Diego network can work together to strengthen the vital lifeline that Medicaid services offer to our community members.

By continuing to support this effort, the County of San Diego Board of Supervisors demonstrates its commitment to the health and well-being of all San Diegans. Together, we can realize a future where San Diegans, especially the most vulnerable, have the opportunity to achieve optimal health.



**LEGAL AID SOCIETY
OF SAN DIEGO**

OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC ATTORNEY

Gwen Hanley-Pamplin
Chairperson, Board of Directors

Joanna Fox, Esq.
Chairperson-Elect, Board of Directors

Joanne L. Franciscus, Esq.
CEO/Executive Director

Gregory Evans Knoll Midtown Office
1764 San Diego Ave. Suite 100, San Diego, CA 92110

Southeast San Diego Office
110 S. Euclid Ave. San Diego, CA 92114

North County Office
100 E. San Marcos Blvd. Suite 308, San Marcos, CA 92069

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to protecting the health of San Diego County residents.

Sincerely,

LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF SAN DIEGO

JOANNE L. FRANCISCUS, ESQ. (she/her)
CEO/Executive Director
Gregory Evans Knoll Midtown Office



Amber J. Ter-Vrugt
Senior Director, Government Relations
Office of the President
Scripps Health

10140 Campus Point Drive, CPA-320
San Diego, CA 92121
Tel 858-678-6893

July 16, 2024

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of San Diego
1600 Pacific Highway, Suite 335
San Diego, CA 92101

[sent electronically to: Andrew.Potter@sdcounty.ca.gov; meghan.elledge@sdcounty.ca.gov]

**SUBJECT: Item #15: INCREASING MEDI-CAL REIMBURSEMENT RATES TO IMPROVE
HEALTHCARE FOR NEARLY 1 MILLION SAN DIEGANS**

Honorable San Diego County Board of Supervisors:

Following on the important first steps the Board took in March, Scripps Health (Scripps) is pleased to continue to support your efforts to increase Medi-Cal reimbursement rates and thereby improve access to equitable health care for California's Medicaid (Medi-Cal) beneficiaries in San Diego.

We look forward to hearing today's progress report and reaffirmation of the County's ongoing commitment to finding solutions to the challenges we face due to inadequate reimbursement, under the leadership of Vice Chair Lawson-Remer and Supervisor Montgomery Steppe.

Medi-Cal provides health coverage to low-income Californians — one-third of the entire state and nearly half of all children. Scripps has long supported Medi-Cal expansion work to ensure all Californian's have access to health care services. At the same time, California needs to not only expand the program, but also invest in it. California ranks near the bottom in the United States when it comes to Medicaid reimbursement rates for hospitals and other providers despite our high cost of living and nationally competitive wages for health care workers.

Medi-Cal beneficiaries and those that care for them are often shortchanged. Systemic underfunding means that those who care for Medi-Cal patients in California are reimbursed far

less than what they spend providing care, resulting in fewer resources for California's most vulnerable communities – and therefore San Diego's most vulnerable.

While the state recognizes this issue and is beginning to take steps to improve Medi-Cal reimbursement in certain areas, Medi-Cal inpatient fee-for-service (FFS) reimbursement has been fixed at 2012-13 levels, while expenses for patient care, which include health care worker salaries and benefits, supplies, pharmaceuticals, utilities, and more have increased exponentially during that same period.

The substantial underfunding of the Medi-Cal program for patients and communities served by California's critical safety net providers disproportionately affects people who are often at the highest risk of poor health. Current formulas for reimbursing hospitals do not account for sicker, more disadvantaged communities and has not been increased since its inception a decade ago — all while the needs of communities with socioeconomic challenges have continued to grow.

As a nonprofit integrated, health care delivery system, Scripps has been serving San Diego for 100 years through the dedication of our employees, affiliated physicians, five acute-care hospital campuses and other services throughout the region.

Every day in our hospitals we see members of our community with complex cases that need non-emergency services but are unable to access the health care delivery system and find themselves ending up in the emergency room. We care for these patients in the most expensive setting and without the financial resources to make us whole.

We have long seen the impacts of low Medi-Cal reimbursement rates in our community. Providers like us are having to make tough choices every day to make sure we can continue to serve the community and carry out our mission.

Scripps Health appreciates the County's continued engagement on Medi-Cal reimbursement shortfalls.

Sincerely,



Amber Ter-Vrugt
Senior Director, Government Relations



July 16, 2024

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of San Diego
1600 Pacific Highway, Suite 335
San Diego, California 92101

Re: Letter of Support for Increasing Medi-Cal Reimbursement Rates to Improve Healthcare for Nearly 1 Million San Diegans

Dear Chair Vargas, Vice Chair Lawson-Remer, and Honorable Board of Supervisors,

I am writing to express Sharp HealthCare's strong support for the County's current efforts to ensure every San Diegan has access to the healthcare they need to live healthy and fulfilling lives.

Access to health services is essential for the County to achieve its goal of providing responsive support to our children, seniors, unsheltered residents, and those struggling with mental health and/or substance use disorders. We believe San Diego can become a county where all San Diegans can receive the full spectrum of quality care and treatment they deserve throughout their journey to better health and wellness. Whether that be acute care for a teen with suicidal ideations or a hip replacement for an unsheltered senior, our region is now on a course to be able to deliver the breadth and depth of services this community needs.

We applaud Vice Chair Lawson-Remer and Supervisor Montgomery Steppe for prioritizing this issue and earning your Board's unanimous support. The Board's initial action in March 2024 was a crucial first step to address the growing challenges preventing the provision of timely, adequate, and equitable healthcare services in our region. Today's item, and accompanying progress report, affirm the County's commitment to finding solutions.

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SHARP ORGANIZATIONS


Sharp Memorial Hospital ■ Sharp Grossmont Hospital ■ Sharp Chula Vista Medical Center ■ Sharp Coronado Hospital ■ Sharp Mesa Vista ■
Sharp Mary Birch Hospital for Women and Newborns ■ Sharp McDonald Center ■
Sharp Rees-Stealy Medical Centers ■ Sharp Health Plan ■ Sharp HealthCare Foundations ■ Sharp Prebys Innovation and Education Center

We appreciate the County's thoughtful approach to leverage internal and external experts in the analysis and evaluation of San Diego's Medi-Cal Landscape. As members of the Medicaid Taskforce, we are grateful to be able to contribute our direct experience and to be part of the solution. By comprehensively evaluating existing obstacles, crafting innovative policies, and providing dynamic leadership, the entire San Diego network can work together to strengthen the vital lifeline that Medicaid services offer to our community members.

By continuing to support this effort, the County of San Diego Board of Supervisors demonstrates its commitment to the health and well-being of all San Diegans. Together, we can realize a future where San Diegans, especially the most vulnerable, have the opportunity to achieve optimal health.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to protecting the health of San Diego County residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ch Howard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Christopher D. Howard
President and CEO
Sharp HealthCare

cc: Elly Maienschein, Vice President, Government Relations, Sharp HealthCare
Eugene Mitch Mitchell, Chair, Sharp HealthCare Board of Directors