



April 26, 2016

The Honorable Jim Wood
Chair, Assembly Health Committee
State Capitol, Room 6005
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re:AB 533 (Bonta)- SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Wood,

The National Physicians Alliance, on behalf of our California members, is writing in support of AB 533 (Bonta), which ensures that if consumers do the right thing by visiting in-network hospitals or facilities, they will only be responsible for paying in-network charges and co-pays for all the providers they encounter in their visit. The total amount of cost-sharing will also count toward their out-of-pocket maximum.

NPA believes that physicians should not add financial hardship to their patients' health status. Patients know they have to follow their insurance plan's rules and go to an in-network hospital or facility to keep their out-of-pocket costs low. However, patients are getting surprise bills for hundreds or thousands of dollars from specialists who turn out to be out-of-network, health care professionals they may not have met or had an opportunity to select.

Even though more Californians have health insurance than ever before, surprise out-of-network charges are causing many consumers financial hardship. Surprise bills can be thousands or even tens of thousands of dollars---and do not count toward the annual in-network cost sharing cap of \$6,600. Surprise bills have detrimental effects on consumers' finances and their ability to pay for basic necessities. A recent Kaiser Family Foundation survey found that 61% of those with medical bill problems say they've had difficulty paying other bills as a result of their medical debt and more than a third (35%) say they were unable to pay for basic necessities like food, heat, or housing.

AB 533 would protect patients who visit an in-network hospital or other facility but then get a "surprise bill" from an out-of-network provider. While Californians in managed care plans cannot get surprise bills for out-of-network care provided in the emergency room, AB 533 prohibits surprise billing for non-emergency care, impacting 22 million Californians.

This measure is supported by a broad coalition of consumer, labor and physician groups as well as the Chamber of Commerce and health insurers.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge you to support this measure.

Sincerely,

Jeff Huebner, MD
President, National Physicians Alliance

CC: Assemblymember Rob Bonta, Author
Tam Ma, Health Access California (sponsor)

The National Physicians Alliance is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that offers a professional home to physicians across medical specialties.

We create research and education programs that promote health and foster active engagement of physicians with their communities.

The NPA accepts no funding from pharmaceutical or medical device companies.

Learn more at NPAlliance.org