



1970 Broadway, Suite 760
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www.cfpa.net

April 30, 2020

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

Re: SUPPORT for AB 2520 (Chiu) Medical Records and Form

Dear Assemblymember Wood:

On behalf of California Food Policy Advocates, I'm writing in support of AB 2520 (Chiu) which would expand the public benefit programs for which access to free medical records is required. AB 2520 would also require providers to complete the portions of these forms requiring a medical provider's input and would clarify that legal aid advocates can access medical records without cost on behalf of a patient who needs the records for a public benefit program.

CFPA is a statewide policy and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of low-income Californians. We are part of a larger movement taking place across California to transform our state into a place where all people and communities have equitable access to health, prosperity, opportunity and empowerment. As a trusted partner and voice in this movement, we help advance the ambitious vision we share with our partners by advocating smart, progressive policies that dismantle the barriers standing in the way of more equitable access to healthy, affordable food. For over twenty-six years, we have used evidence-based policy, advocacy, and research to ensure that eligible Californians have access to essential nutrition resources and public benefit programs, including CalFresh.

The current coronavirus (COVID19) pandemic has caused California's unemployment rate to skyrocket, which increased the number of people eligible for CalFresh and other public benefits, highlighting the need for this bill. AB 2520 would clarify that legal aid advocates may, on behalf of a client, receive medical records without cost when used to support eligibility for a public benefit program such as CalFresh. Enacting language sponsored by legal aid support centers, SB 575 (Leyva) in 2017, and AB 1311 (Goldberg) in 2001 intended to include legal aid advocates and the first part of the bill would clarify this enacting legislation.



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In addition, this bill would require health providers to complete forms that are needed to establish or maintain eligibility for a public benefit program. Some health care providers refuse to complete these forms or charge a minimum of \$40 to complete them. When providers do not fill out the forms, patients struggle to pay rent, obtain food and nutrition assistance, or access health care because they cannot access these critical programs.

Finally, this bill would expand access to free medical records for programs serving immigrants with disabilities, for petitions to obtain lawful status for immigrants who are survivors of crime or domestic violence, and for individuals applying for government-funded housing assistance programs. Patients are entitled to their own medical records and provider fees should not be a barrier to applying for public benefit programs, particularly when it concerns an individual's ability to safely reside and be housed.

CFPA supports AB 2520 because it takes proactive steps to help struggling Californians gain access to the medical records they need to qualify public benefit programs. Several public benefit programs do require access to medical records. For example, the ABAWD time limit for CalFresh limits certain unemployed, childless adults to only three months of CalFresh nutrition assistance within 36 months unless they meet specific exemptions. Individuals who have been medically certified as physically or mentally unfit for employment are not subject to the three month limit. Determining whether or not such an individual is exempt from the time limit could be done through a careful review of the individual's medical records. In addition, child care providers are required to obtain a signed medical statement when food and beverage substitutions do not meet the meal pattern requirements of the Child and Adult Care Food Program. The medical statement must be signed by a physician, physician's assistant, or nurse practitioner and must include a description of the participant's physical or mental impairment. If it isn't possible to obtain a medical statement from a medical provider then child and adult care providers aren't able to adjust meals accordingly to meet children and older adults nutritional needs.

For these reasons, California Food Policy Advocates supports AB 2520 and urge your 'aye' vote.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. C.", is written below the word "Sincerely,".



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Melissa Cannon
California Food Policy Advocates

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