



August 20, 2020

Honorable Gavin Newsom  
Governor, State of California  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: Diversity in Healthcare Workforce**

Dear Governor Newsom:

We write to you today to respectfully request that you continue to prioritize long term health outcomes in our most vulnerable communities by supporting diversity in our healthcare workforce. Lack of access to care, an aging population, and a shortage of medical professionals statewide are bringing to the forefront the challenges that COVID-19 represents for our communities of color, many of whom may choose not to seek medical care because of fear and distrust in systems that do not adequately address their cultural and linguistic needs. Due to these disparities, we specifically ask that, should conversations on a vape tax continue this year, you include revenue allocations that support training future health care professionals that are representative of our populations.

In February 2019, the [California Future Health Workforce Commission](#) released its final report on meeting the demand for health, including its top ten recommendations to helping close the workforce gap and building a diverse healthcare workforce. The Commission estimated that by 2030, California will need an extra 10,500 primary care providers to adequately treat its populations. This will only increase the strain and ability for doctors and medical professionals to treat Latino, African Americans, Native Americans, and Asian populations in California who are already severely underrepresented in health professions. Without doctors and medical professionals who understand the populations they serve; we will be unable to meet the needs of an estimated 7.3 million patients with limited English proficiency.

The disparity in services and workforce will only continue to exacerbate the struggle among communities of color that we now see evidenced in the high share of confirmed cases and deaths due to COVID-19. According to the California Department of Public Health, as of August 19, Latinos bear a disproportionate share of confirmed COVID-19 cases representing 59.2 percent of confirmed cases and 47.7 percent of deaths, as compared to a 38.9 percent share of California's population.

---

(CHAIR)  
Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez

(VICE CHAIR)  
Senator María Elena Durazo

SENATORS  
Bob Archuleta, Anna Caballero, Lena A. Gonzalez, Ben Hueso, Melissa Hurtado, Susan Rubio

ASSEMBLYMEMBERS  
Cecilia Aguiar-Curry, Joaquin Arambula, Ian Calderon, Wendy Carrillo, Sabrina Cervantes, Susan Talamantes Eggman, Cristina Garcia, Eduardo Garcia, Todd Gloria, Monique Limón, Jose Medina, Sharon Quirk-Silva, James Ramos, Speaker Anthony Rendon, Eloise Gómez Reyes, Luz Rivas, Robert Rivas, Freddie Rodriguez, Blanca E. Rubio, Rudy Salas, Miguel Santiago

1020 N Street, Suite 511 • Sacramento, CA 95814 • Phone (916) 651-1535

Additionally, Latino physicians only represent seven percent of California's total provider workforce, with other allied health professionals also falling behind in proportional representation. Despite this inequitable representation, the Commission noted that physicians from minority backgrounds are more likely to practice in health professional shortage areas providing care to residents who are often minority, uninsured patients reliant on Medi-Cal and Medicaid.

One of the key recommendations made by the Commission was implementing a California Health Career Opportunity Program (HCOP). This model, based on the federal HCOP, has shown success in increasing diversity in health professions, with more than 80 percent of participants from underrepresented minorities (39 percent Hispanic/Latino, 40 percent Black/African American, and 3 percent American Indian or Alaska Native) in 2016-2017 alone. Specifically, in Fresno, HCOP has served approximately 418 disadvantaged students through a collaborative program with California State University, Fresno from 2007-2018.

Unfortunately, the federal HCOP guidelines have changed under the new federal administration that prohibits access for undocumented students. This does not reflect the California values we believe in or the awareness that our students serve in the communities from which they come. An annual investment of \$15.9 million for a California Health Careers Opportunity Program will fund 20 five-year HCOP programs at community college, CSU, UC, and private campuses. An approximate 4,800 pre-health students, regardless of immigration status, are expected to be served with this investment, with an estimated 25,500 new health professionals entering the workforce by 2030 – and nearly 23,000 of these workers coming from underrepresented populations.

COVID-19 has exacerbated the health disparities in our communities of color and it will impact health outcomes for years to come among populations that already lack access of adequate care. Our healthcare workforce programs have not made significant progress in decades to address disparities in provider workforce. It is because of these and the aforementioned reasons that we ask you to invest in increasing the diversity of our healthcare workforce so that we can rise out of this pandemic stronger.

Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to call us, or our caucus staff, at (916) 651-1535 should you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,



LORENA GONZALEZ  
Chair, CA Latino Legislative Caucus  
Assemblywoman, 80<sup>th</sup> District



MARIA ELENA DURAZO  
Vice Chair, CA Latino Legislative Caucus  
Senator, 24<sup>th</sup> District



CECILIA AGUIAR-CURRY  
Assemblymember, 4<sup>th</sup> District



JOAQUIN ARAMBULA  
Assemblymember, 31<sup>st</sup> District



ANNA CABALLERO  
Senator, 12<sup>th</sup> District



WENDY CARRILLO  
Assemblymember, 51<sup>st</sup> District



MELISSA HURTADO  
Senator, 14<sup>th</sup> District



CRISTINA GARCIA  
Assemblymember, 58<sup>th</sup> District



MONIQUE LIMON  
Assemblymember, 37<sup>th</sup> District



JOSE MEDINA  
Assemblymember, 61<sup>st</sup> District



SHARON QUIRK-SILVA  
Assemblymember, 65<sup>th</sup> District



ELOISE GOMEZ-REYES  
Assemblymember, 47<sup>th</sup> District



LUZ RIVAS  
Assemblymember, 39<sup>th</sup> District



ROBERT RIVAS  
Assemblymember, 30<sup>th</sup> District



BLANCA RUBIO  
Assemblymember, 48<sup>th</sup> District



MIGUEL SANTIAGO  
Assemblymember, 53<sup>rd</sup> District



RUDY SALAS  
Assemblymember, 32<sup>nd</sup> District



ANTONIO VAZQUEZ  
Board of Equalization Member- District 3