

To: Co-Chairs of the Ways and Means Committee and the Co-Chairs of the Subcommittee on Human Services

From: Health Services Advisory Council at Central City Concern

Date: 5/29/2019

The Health Services Advisory Council (HSAC) is a representative group of clients and patients receiving health services from Central City Concern (CCC). One of our members sits on the CCC board of directors to support and inform the organization's structure and long-term goals. The purpose of the HSAC is to provide input to CCC Health Services in its mission of providing access to a full spectrum of primary care and essential recovery services to homeless and low-income individuals.

This legislative session we are asking the state legislature to improve our current system of care by creating a palliative care program, making new and deep investments in behavioral health and moving forward recommendations from the Governor's Opioid Epidemic task force.

Palliative care is a missing piece in our current health care system. There is currently a gap in our health care system, individuals can access relevant and appropriate care for both curative disease/disorders or hospice care for end of life support. Community members who are in between these two levels of care often struggle to find the appropriate levels of support. People experiencing homelessness are especially vulnerable to this disconnect and end up with increased utilization of emergency and hospital service while experiencing higher levels of rapid decompensation compared to people who are housed. **If Senate Bill 179 is passed CCC intends start a new program at the Blackburn Center (opening in July) to match housing placement with palliative care.**

House Bill 3095 increases the reimbursement rated for behavioral health by 35%. The current reimbursement rates are approximately 39% below the cost of providing treatment. When the state doesn't adequately invest in the cost of coverage the services available become harder to access for those most in need.

Substance Use Disorder (SUD) is a chronic condition and should be treated as such throughout all our institutional systems. Having this common understanding will improve services across different providers and services. Project Nurture, that is specifically targeted at supporting mothers who are pregnant and parenting small children, is critically important to getting early health interventions to those most in need. **House Bill 2257 will take our SUDs response systems to the next level.**

We ask that you schedule a work session and vote yes on Senate Bill 179, House Bill 3095, and House Bill 2257.

Thank you for prioritizing the needs of the community,

*Patty Arvizu
Mamie Gathard
David Yandell*

*Zoie Barba
Ryan Hamit*

*Sandra Delarosa
Rai McKenzie*