

TO: Health California Commission
FROM: Marian Shostrom, Pleasant Hill, CA
RE: Environmental Analysis Comments
DATE: October 29, 2020

I have observed all of the Commission Hearings with interest. I am a strong advocate of a single payer financing system. The current system of multiple payers, narrow networks, and hospital consolidation has made healthcare in the United States inadequate, unaffordable, and extremely inequitable. Single payer financing would eliminate the tremendous waste going to administrative, coding and billing costs. Instead, that money could be used for patient care.

The current pandemic has shown us that health insurance should not be tied to employment. We all know people who choose to work in jobs that provide health insurance. Our daughter was born with a congenital heart defect, and has had a number of health issues throughout her life. She always received the health care she needed because of our excellent employer-provided health insurance. We knew other families who were not as fortunate, and had to deal with sick children, inadequate and unaffordable care, and financial insecurity.

We were grateful that the ACA allowed us to keep our daughter on our health insurance until she was twenty-six, and prohibited insurance companies from denying coverage because of the pre-existing condition she was born with. I was grateful that the ACA provided more Californians with health care. Covered California insurance is extremely expensive, with high premiums, high deductibles and copays, making it unaffordable for many residents.

There is considerable evidence from numerous studies that a single payer healthcare financing system would allow every California resident to receive the health care they need, rather than the health care they can afford. Commissioner Hsiao could provide his extensive knowledge of how Taiwan transitioned to a single payer non-for-profit system.

I live in Contra Costa County, and parts of the County are healthcare deserts. Doctors Hospital, the public hospital in Richmond, is closed. People who used to go there for emergency care now have to go to hospitals that are far away. Someone who had a heart attack died because heavy traffic congestion made it impossible for him to get to a hospital in time.

I hope the Commission will prioritize equity issues as it looks at healthcare delivery systems. Perhaps primary care physicians could be paid more, and specialty physicians could be paid less. Medical school costs for primary care physicians might need to be subsidized. There are many models for the Commission to consider and make recommendations to the Legislature.

An adequate healthcare system should include drugs, dental, vision, hearing, mental health, and long-term care, as well as preventive care. I currently pay separately for each of these healthcare needs through either insurance or out-of-pocket costs. I would gladly pay that money into a single payer financing system that covers every California resident.