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May 28, 2024

The Honorable Richard Roth, Chair  
Senate Health Committee  
1021 O Street, Room 3310  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Support for AB 1895 (Weber)— Public health: maternity ward closures**

Dear Chair Roth,

Local Health Plans of California (“LHPC”) is the statewide trade association representing all 17 of California’s non-for-profit and community-based health plans, which collectively cover 70% of the state’s Medi-Cal managed care enrollees or nearly 9.3 million Californians. LHPC is writing to express our support for AB 1895 (Weber), which would require hospitals with maternity wards at risk of closure to report specific data to the State to inform a community impact assessment and ensure a public noticing and public comment process.

In California, there is a very real threat to maternity healthcare and access. A recent investigation by CalMatters revealed that a total of 46 maternity wards have closed since 2012, usually due to costs compared to payer mix, inability to recruit and retain providers, and/or declining birthing rates. There are 12 counties in California that do not have any maternity wards, and for one local plan that operates in 24 Northern California counties, half of the 50 hospitals in those counties no longer offer obstetric services. This is a threat to the health and wellbeing of mothers and babies alike, where the lack of access to obstetric care has a direct impact on maternal and infant health outcomes. While maternity wards continue to close, increasing the number of maternal care deserts, California is experiencing an increase in maternal morbidity and adverse infant outcomes. AB 1895 will offer the State and policymakers the information necessary to potentially intervene in maternity ward closures when possible and to help inform policy and budget decisions that directly impact maternity care.

For these reasons, LHPC supports AB 1895 and respectfully requests your 'aye' vote.

Sincerely,

*Katie Andrew*

Katie Andrew  
Director of Government Affairs  
Local Health Plans of California

cc:

Assemblymember Weber  
Members, Senate Health Committee