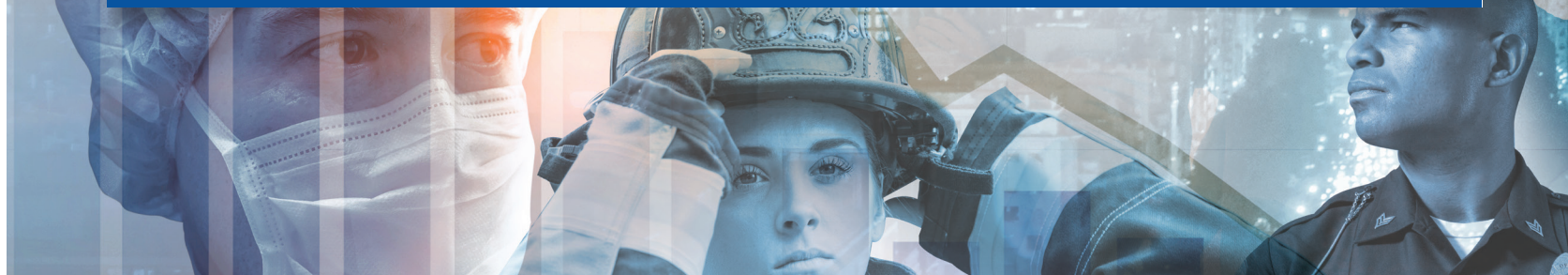


Government-Mandated Premium Pay for Health Care Workers Fails to Recognize All Heroes

A MESSAGE FROM SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S HOSPITALS AND HEALTH SYSTEMS



Our health care workers are heroes. And we are all indebted to our essential workers and frontline caregivers who have proven their commitment by caring for over 1.2 million Los Angeles County residents infected with COVID-19.

As policy makers move to introduce so-called “hero pay” mandates for health care workers, they fail to consider the millions of other essential workers like firefighters, transit workers, teachers, peace officers, restaurant and retail workers who also kept our communities safe and functioning during the pandemic. Imposing additional compensation mandates on hospitals is not only arbitrary, but also fails to recognize other invaluable allies in the fight against COVID-19.

Early on, the health care community banded together to form unprecedented alliances with public health leaders, emergency medical services, first responders, hospital leaders, and others. These groups came together with a common goal – to provide high quality care to our communities and mitigate the impacts of the pandemic. **By singling out health care workers, policy makers are picking winners and losers. We must ask the question – why are some essential workers deserving of bonuses while others are not?**

Thanks to the collective efforts of ALL frontline workers, we can now look forward to loosening restrictions and reopening the state's economy. **As COVID-19 cases trend downward and vaccination rates climb, we must question the timing of these misguided mandates. By any measure, the elevated threat that hospital workers faced during the height of the pandemic no longer exists.**

These measures also fail to consider that throughout the pandemic, hospitals continuously stepped up to make sure health care workers have the support they need to safely

care for patients. In addition to modifying operations to safeguard the health of patients and employees, hospitals spent hundreds of millions of dollars to voluntarily provide things like mental health support and counseling, free housing, child care, paid time off, and bonus pay.

Last week, the California State Assembly found a statewide unfunded \$7 billion health care worker “hero pay” bill unsound, and it was effectively shelved. If the state found this legislation to be deeply flawed, why should individual municipalities move forward with their own arbitrary mandates on hospitals?

As hospitals begin the slow process of restoring normal operations, they are faced with more headwinds. Rather than support hospitals, a handful of state and local policy makers have proposed bills that would cause further financial strain and jeopardize hospitals' ability to maintain services. **Hospitals now face a steep road to regain their financial stability, while providing vital care and services to their communities and remaining ready for new crises, no matter what they may be.**

Rather than pursuing costly and inequitable mandates, policy makers should work with hospitals to ensure they have adequate resources to respond to future crises and prioritize investments in critical hospital infrastructure like emergency rooms, ICUs, and trauma units.

We urge policy makers to reject mandates that arbitrarily decide who is most deserving. ALL of our heroic frontline workers were instrumental in turning the tide of the pandemic – but unequal mandates devalue the contributions of thousands of heroes. State and local leaders should reinforce the invaluable institutions that keep our communities healthy and work to bolster a recovering economy. Government-mandated premium pay falls short on both fronts.



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