

1 [Supporting California State Assembly Bill No. 1611 (Chiu) - Emergency Hospital Services]

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3 **Resolution supporting California State Assembly Bill No. 1611, authored by Assembly**  
4 **Member David Chiu, which would extend consumer protections from the practice of**  
5 **“balance billing” to all privately-insured patients at San Francisco General Hospital.**  
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7 WHEREAS, San Francisco General Hospital (SF General) is the City and County of  
8 San Francisco’s premiere – and only – Level 1 trauma and emergency service institution,  
9 caring for some 108,000 patients per year, including almost 4,000 trauma cases and more  
10 than 83,000 psychiatric and medical emergency department visits annually; and

11 WHEREAS, The vast majority of patients at SF General Hospital have Medi-Cal,  
12 Medicare or are uninsured, and only 6.2% of patients have private commercial insurance and  
13 come to SF General Hospital for trauma and emergency services; and

14 WHEREAS, SF General is an “out-of-network” institution, and, while private insurance  
15 companies have generally been unwilling to negotiate with SF General to agree on billing  
16 rates for services received by the hospital’s relatively small population of privately-insured  
17 patients, those private insurers are nevertheless billed for those services; and

18 WHEREAS, The practice of “balance billing” occurs when a patient’s insurance covers  
19 only a portion of a hospital bill, leaving the patient responsible for the remainder of the bill; and

20 WHEREAS, On September 23, 2016, California Governor Jerry Brown signed  
21 Assembly Bill No. 72 (Bonta), which extended consumer protections from balance billing to  
22 patients with HMO plans who receive emergency services at out-of-network facilities; and

23 WHEREAS, For the remaining insured patients with PPO health insurance plans, who  
24 constitute about 3.8% of patients who visit SF General, if a private insurer does not cover the  
25 whole amount of their bill, they are left with the outstanding balance of the bill; and

1 WHEREAS, While patients subject to balance billing are a small percentage of the  
2 patients served by SF General Hospital, that percentage nevertheless represents upwards of  
3 1,700 patients with PPO plans last year who were potentially affected by balance billing; and

4 WHEREAS, By the Department of Public Health's own estimate, somewhere between  
5 5,000 and 6,000 privately-insured patients over the past four years have been left struggling  
6 to pay the balance of their bills, which balances in some instances are in the tens of  
7 thousands of dollars; and

8 WHEREAS, On February 22, 2019, Assembly Member Chiu and principal coauthor  
9 Senator Wiener introduced Assembly Bill No. 1611 to further extend consumer protections  
10 from balance billing to privately-insured patients with PPO plans, ensuring that those patients  
11 will owe the same copayment or deductible at out-of-network institutions like SF General that  
12 they would pay for in-network emergency care; therefore, be it

13 RESOLVED, The Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco hereby  
14 urges the California State Legislature and the Governor to pass Assembly Bill No. 1611; and,  
15 be it

16 FURTHER RESOLVED, The San Francisco Board of Supervisors hereby directs the  
17 Clerk of the Board to send a copy of the resolution to the City's State Legislature and the City  
18 Lobbyist upon passage.