March 30th, 2023

The Honorable Susan Talamantes Eggman  
Chair, Senate Health Committee  
1021 O Street, Room 3310  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 770 (Wiener) Unified Healthcare Financing – Support

Dear Chair Eggman,

The California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA), one of the state’s foremost grassroots senior and disability advocacy organizations, representing over 1 million Californians, is proud to support SB 770 (Wiener), which would provide concrete steps and establishes a definitive timeline toward creating guaranteed, equitable, healthcare to all California residents that provides better care at less cost through unified public financing.

While most of California’s seniors (over six million) are mostly on Medicare and MediCal, we continue to experience real harm from the fragmentation and inequities of the current healthcare system. Our members who live in rural communities cannot get a timely appointment due to the physician shortage, and the private hospital industry is closing or moving to more profitable markets, leaving patients without local hospitals.

Our children and grandchildren continue to bear the escalating cost of healthcare as these expenditures bite into their paychecks - thanks to decades of wage stagnation coupled with rising inflation - and household budgets. Patients experience discrimination and a lack of culturally competent caregiving. These shortcomings result in severe and sometimes lethal gaps in medically necessary health coverage and disproportionately impact historically and systematically marginalized groups.

We continue to support healthcare coverage expansions and financial assistance for California residents to access health services, but disparities and gaps remain as revealed during the on-going COVID pandemic. We need a comprehensive, systemic fix.

SB 770 makes viable the systemic change we need by establishing a specific statutory pathway for pursuit of guaranteed healthcare for all in California.

Affording seniors, and all Californians, viable resources to age with grace, dignity and independence - such as enhancing health equity, access and affordability - not only represent CARA’s foundational principles but we believe will ensure a healthier, more accessible and inclusive California for our aging community.
For these reasons, CARA strongly supports SB 770 by Senator Wiener, and we respectfully ask for your AYE vote.

Sincerely,

Hene Kelly
Chair, Legislative Committee
California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA)

Keith Umemoto
Co-Chair, Legislative Committee
California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA)