April 5th, 2023

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

RE: SB 779 (Stern) Primary Care Clinic Data Modernization Act – 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 779 (Stern), which would revise and extend Community Health Center reporting so that it would better provide information on CHC revenue spent on workforce, quality, and equity.

CHC use by CARA’s members may well be rising as CHCs' share of income from Medicare is rising. Seniors have particular need of healthcare services for conditions including hearing loss, cataracts, and refractive errors, back and neck pain, and osteoarthritis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, diabetes, depression and dementia. As people age, we are more likely to experience several conditions at the same time.

Last year, Emily Alpert Reyes of the LA Times reported that 2022 CHC medical assistant turnover rates were nearly 3 times higher than those of 2020. Alpert Reyes also reported that care is being delayed as turnover rises. Last year, a University of Chicago research team led by Selena Zhong reported that, “nearly one in five older adults who experienced delayed care reported being negatively affected”.

While we can see turnover rates correlates with harmful delays, we need more information on how factors like turnover affect healthcare quality. As decline in quality and access to healthcare is particularly serious for seniors, legislation that could lead to information that could help improve it is critical.

Given seniors’ elevated need of health care, recent CHC turnover, the connection of turnover and delayed care, the harm that delayed access causes, and many questions about how turnover and related factors affect quality of seniors’ care, the policy proposed in SB 779 could lead to a better understanding of these factors and outcomes for seniors.

We respectfully urge your AYE vote on SB 779.

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Sincerely,

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

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