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Gipson Bill to Decompress Overcrowded Emergency Rooms Advances to Governor

AB 3115 would allow paramedics to operate outside their traditional role to enhance access to care

SACRAMENTO, Calif --- Last week, the California State Assembly approved legislation authored by Assemblymember Mike A. Gipson (D-Carson) to authorize the creation of six innovative Community Paramedicine and Alternate Destination programs to ease the burden on emergency rooms.

AB 3115—also known as the "Community Paramedicine or Triage to Alternate Destination Act of 2018"—allows local EMS agencies to develop programs that are proven to increase access to healthcare and improve patient outcomes, including:

- Post-discharge, short-term follow up for patients recently discharged from a hospital due to a chronic condition
- Case management for frequent 9-1-1 callers
- Alternate destination transport to mental health facilities
- Alternate destination transport to sobering centers
- Directly observed therapy for tuberculosis
- Hospice care

"We have a hidden health care crisis in California—and it exists inside of our overcrowded emergency rooms. When patients call 9-1-1, paramedics and firefighters respond to all kinds of crises that do not require the patient to be sent to a hospital. Yet, our loved ones aren't able to receive the right care at the right time because paramedics cannot transport patients to appropriate facilities other than an emergency room," said Asm. Gipson. "This bill seeks to change that. Community Paramedicine and Alternate Destination programs allow specially-trained paramedics to do what they do best—assess a patient in response to a 9-1-1 call and work with the patient to determine what kind of care they need, such as mental health care or just some time to sober up. We trust our paramedics to stabilize our loved ones when they are having a heart attack or stroke. We should also trust them to provide transitional care when that patient is leaving the hospital after a heart attack. These are quick-thinking, trained, and most importantly,

trusted members of our community who simply need flexibility to enhance access to care for people in their most vulnerable state."

Evaluations of existing Community Paramedicine pilot programs show that these programs improve coordination amongst health systems and reduce ambulance transports and emergency department use, with improved patient outcomes and no displacement of health professionals.

Co-authored by Senator Bob Hertzberg and Assemblymember Rob Bonta and sponsored by the California Professional Firefighters, AB 3115 is supported by the California Medical Association, California Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians, San Francisco Department of Public Health, National Association of Social Workers—California Chapter, Mental Health America of Los Angeles, The Steinberg Institute, among others.

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