



June 1, 2022

John Ohanian
Director for the Center for Data Insights and Innovation Office
California Health and Human Services Agency

Re: Policy Board Timing and Infrastructure Funding

Dear Mr. Ohanian:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input following our Stakeholder Advisory Group meeting on May 18, 2022. The state needs to move forward on establishing an HIE Policy Board in statute as soon as possible and ideally no later than this year. We cannot afford to wait until the next legislative session to put a governing board in place. Data exchange is central to the rollout of the state's major initiatives such as CalAIM and, therefore, governance must be outlined and enacted into statute this year with an effective date no later than January 1, 2023.

An effective governing body must include key principles: authority granted in statute, clear decision rights and accountability, multistakeholder participation, open and transparent processes, and shared appointing authority and conflict of interest protections. Previous group discussions have made it evident that having clarity about the governance model is an important step toward finalizing the data sharing agreement.

I was pleased to see that the Governor's revised proposed budget offers financial assistance to providers. Funding is critical over the next several years to build infrastructure, especially for small providers, and behavioral health and social service providers. Without adequate funding, we risk a lack of participation at the local levels, especially among providers who need the technical and financial resources to participate in statewide data exchange. Their ability to participate is vital to the state's drive for health equity.

We must not leave counties out of the funding discussion. They are critical in terms of providing public health and behavioral health services. There has been a historic underinvestment in county IT systems. As a result, in many counties, public health relies on faxes and paper documentation or basic systems that do not support the electronic exchange of health data. It is necessary for the success of CalAIM and the health and safety of Californians to ensure that all counties have the financial support they need to participate in statewide data exchange, not just those with significant resources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sandra R. Hernández, MD".

Sandra R. Hernández, MD
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