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Barbara J. Thomas
Executive Director

April 15, 2021

The Honorable Anthony J. Portantino, Senator, District 25
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
State Capitol, Room 2206
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUBJECT: SB 213 (Cortese) — OPPOSE

Dear Chair Portantino:

On behalf of the South Orange County Economic Coalition (Coalition), I am writing to oppose Senate Bill (SB) 213. This bill would establish a presumption in the workers' compensation program for hospital employees for a broad range of illnesses and injuries and relieve these employees from having to demonstrate that certain infectious diseases, musculoskeletal injuries, and respiratory diseases arose out of their work environment.

As south Orange County's leading voice of business, the South Orange County Economic Coalition is the driving force of advocating for a strong local economy. We focus on four key areas: Advocacy, Education, Representation and Progress for South Orange County issues, initiatives and projects. We support and encourage a streamlined government process. Representing hundreds of employees, we are an alliance of businesses, community thought-leaders and stakeholders committed to enhancing the region's economic vitality and protecting its exceptional quality of life.

The Coalition realizes that employee safety is indeed a top priority for our member hospitals and health systems. However, work-related injuries can occur. In those cases, every one of their employees has access to California's no-fault workers' compensation system, which is designed to support employees. However, when a disagreement arises, there is great value in the current resolution process, a fair and robust procedure administered by the Division of Workers' Compensation.

Our shared concerns center on the following key reasons:

- There is a complete absence of evidence that the current process is not working for the illnesses and injuries encompassed in SB 213. In fact, research shows that health care employers are a leader in the industry when it comes to approving the vast majority of workers' compensation claims.
- A presumption in workers' compensation can result in hundreds of thousands of dollars in temporary and permanent disability payments and medical costs for a single case, with little to no evidence the injury occurred at work.



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- Any increase in workers' compensation costs will have a direct and immediate impact on the financial ability of a hospital to protect access to high-quality care, a position already in jeopardy due to the severe economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The cost of this new mandate, while difficult to quantify, would likely be astronomical. One musculoskeletal claim, which could be filed as many as five years after employment ends, could reach hundreds of thousands of dollars for a hospital or health system that is self-insured.

For these reasons, the South Orange County Economic Coalition respectfully asks for your "NO" vote on SB 213. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Barbara J. Thomas
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Patricia C. Bates, Senator, 36 District
Vice Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee