



*A driving force for health equity*



**California  
Telehealth  
Network**

*An OCHIN organization*

Submitted via electronic mail

March 15, 2023

The Honorable Akilah Weber  
1021 O St  
State Capitol, Room 4130  
Sacramento, CA 95814-4900

Re: AB 85, Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) Screening and Outreach

Dear Assemblymember Weber,

On behalf of OCHIN and the California Telehealth Network (CTN), I am pleased to offer our support for AB 85, which would scale social determinants of health (SDOH) screenings and referrals that improve health outcomes for patients facing persistent structural inequality in need of community-based services. When social drivers of health are not addressed, even when receiving evidence-based standards of care, patient health outcomes are worse. This legislation is an important step forward in achieving the goals of CalAIM and broader State health care priorities of moving to value-based care delivery and payment.

OCHIN is a national nonprofit health information technology and research network of locally controlled community health providers that offers technology solutions, informatics, evidence-based research, and policy insights. For over two decades, OCHIN has advanced health care solutions by leveraging the strength of our network's unique data set and the practical experience of our members to drive technology innovation for patients and providers in rural and other underserved communities. CTN is a leading consortium of organizations focused on increasing access to healthcare through telehealth platforms and education and affordable broadband throughout the state.

In California, OCHIN network members serve 1.6 million active patients, more than 500,000 of whom are Medi-Cal enrollees. OCHIN has the nation's largest EHR-embedded dataset on SDOH in primary care community health centers. More than 1.6 million SDOH screenings (875,000 unique patients) have been electronically documented by the OCHIN national network through the beginning of 2023.

Addressing SDOH is vital to overcoming long-standing health disparities that have only worsened as public health emergencies including the COVID-19 pandemic, an epidemic in opioid use disorder, and a mental health crisis have converged. Evidence from the last decade-plus has shown that only 10% to 20% of a person's health status is related to the clinical care that they receive, with genetics and behavioral and social factors composing the rest. The importance of addressing SDOH continues to grow as national trends show widespread need for assistance with basic social needs that directly impact health and wellbeing, such as stable housing, food, transportation, and utilities.

Understanding and tracking SDOH-related patient outcomes and resolution and requiring coverage of SDOH screening and community connection is foundational to delivering whole patient care. Screenings and assessments must also be accompanied by measurement of resolution to ensure a meaningful and comprehensive care continuum.

Social determinants of health are a key factor in ensuring equitable access to care and improved patient outcomes for all in California. Please contact me at [stollj@ochin.org](mailto:stollj@ochin.org) if we can provide any additional information to support your efforts to expand the scope and importance of SDOH in whole patient care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jennifer Stoll". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer Stoll  
Executive Vice President  
External Affairs