

"Food prescription" Bill Moves Ahead

Assembly Bill 368 (Bonta/Gomez Reyes), Food Prescriptions won unanimous and bipartisan support in the Assembly Health Committee last week. The legislation establishes pilot projects in 3 counties, including Alameda to provide Food Prescriptions for fruits, vegetables, lean protein and other healthy food to members of Medi-Cal Managed Care plans with diet related health conditions.

"The goals of AB 368 are bold, innovative and ambitious. Just as a health provider would write a prescription for an antibiotic for an infection, a prescription for medically supportive food can have the same affect for someone with prediabetes or hypertension," Assemblyman Rob Bonta told the Committee.

The legislation uses an equity lens to target Medi-Cal members with the greatest health disparities. "These health disparities exist because our health care system is stuck downstream. By addressing these health conditions at the front end, we can close the persistent health disparity gaps in our State" said Alameda County Supervisor Wilma Chan in her testimony to the Committee.

Steven Chen, Medical Director of ALL IN reported that participants in the Alameda County program saw an average of a 16 point reduction in blood pressure. For reference, he said, a 10 point elevation in blood pressure is associated with twice the risk of death from a heart attack or stroke.

Assemblyman Bonta has been nominated as Attorney General and is expected to leave the Assembly in the coming weeks. Assembly Majority Leader Eloise Gómez Reyes, D- San Bernardino, currently a co-author will become the bill's new author. In addition to serving as Majority Leader, the Assemblywoman Chairs the Assembly Human Services Committee and is a member of the Assembly Budget Committee.

How to help: The legislation is expected to be heard in the Assembly Appropriations Committee in the coming weeks.

To support the legislation, please submit your organizational letter to the Assembly Appropriations Committee at appropriations@assembly.ca.gov Subject line: RE: Assembly Bill 368, Food Prescription Pilot Program – Support
Please copy Shannon Flores in Assemblywoman Gomez Reyes's office at Shannon.Flores@asm.ca.gov and Rachel Richman in Supervisor Wilma Chan's office at Rachel.Richman@acgov.org