



Assembly Member **SANDRÉ SWANSON**  
News Release

**For Immediate Release:**  
April 22, 2009

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## Bill To Aid Medically Underserved Communities Advances With Bipartisan Support

**(Sacramento)** - An important bill to aid medically underserved urban and rural communities passed the Assembly Committee on Business and Professions yesterday on a bi-partisan 6-2 vote. AB 646 would authorize California Health Care Districts, public hospitals, nonprofit hospitals and clinics in medically underserved rural and urban communities to directly hire and employ physicians.

In his statement before the committee, Assemblymember Sandré R. Swanson (D-Alameda) spoke about the need for his bill. "Within the next two to three years, the shortage of physicians in medically underserved urban and rural communities will increase. Direct employment is the only way to ensure that Medi-Cal and uninsured patients have access to care."

Current law prohibits the employment of physicians by corporations and other artificial entities, even though there are several exemptions to this prohibition in law and practice. Public entities, such as State and County health agencies, currently employ thousands of physicians statewide. Health Care Districts, on the other hand, are the only public healthcare providers in California prohibited from direct physician employment.

In addition, to authorizing the direct hire of physicians, AB 646 will protect patients' and physicians' rights by prohibiting these Districts from interfering in medical decisions.

Peter Gambee, representing the Association of California Health Care Districts which co-sponsored the bill, also spoke to the importance of attracting doctors into medically underserved areas. "AB 646 isn't about competition, profits or money. No one is competing to provide health care to people who can't afford to pay for it. This legislation will help our hospitals and clinics provide quality health care to Californians who today can't get access to care."

"This legislation proactively addresses the problem of encouraging physicians to practice in rural and low-income inner-city environments, where the majority of Medi-Cal and Medicare patients reside. This bill will safeguard the health of Californians in these most vulnerable areas," concluded Swanson.

The bill will be heard next in the Assembly Committee on Health.

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