



May 16, 2025

The Honorable Chair Jesse Gabriel  
Assembly Budget Committee  
1021 O Street, Suite 8230  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Chair Scott Wiener  
Senate Budget Committee  
1021 O Street, Suite 8620  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Dawn Addis  
Assembly Budget Sub Committee 1  
1021 O Street, Suite 4120  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Dr. Akilah Weber Pierson  
Senate Budget Sub Committee 3  
1021 O Street, Suite 7310  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Removal of MediCal Acupuncture Benefits – May Revision  
Notice of Opposition – California Acupuncture Coalition**

Dear Senator Wiener, Senator Weber Pierson, Assembly Member Gabriel, and Assembly Member Addis:

On behalf of the California Acupuncture Coalition, I am writing to express our strong opposition to the proposed removal of acupuncture benefits from Medi-Cal in the Governor's May Budget Revision.

California has approximately 12,185 active licensed acupuncturists and we are recognized as primary care providers. Within our coalition, we have providers who specialize in pediatric acupuncture and conduct leading research in University of California labs, providers who treat elite athletes recovering from major surgeries like ACL repairs and experts in geriatric acupuncture who help elderly patients regain mobility after invasive procedures such as back or hip surgeries.

The elimination of acupuncture from Medi-Cal would be devastating—for our patients, our providers, and public health across California. In many of our clinics, more than 80% of patients rely on Medi-Cal to access acupuncture services. Removing this benefit would strip low-income individuals of a vital, proven treatment option, forcing them either to pay out of pocket or to forgo care entirely. In rural regions especially, acupuncturists often serve as essential primary care providers for patients with few other options.

Acupuncture is a modest but high-impact investment—costing Medi-Cal approximately **\$9 million** annually—and it delivers significant return on investment. Research has consistently shown that acupuncture:

- Effectively manages chronic pain and other conditions;
- Reduces the need for costly interventions such as surgery, opioids, and frequent doctor visits;
- Improves patient outcomes, supports preventive care, and lowers emergency room use;
- Plays a key role in mitigating the risk of opioid dependency.

That's why acupuncture is endorsed by respected authorities, including:

- The Joint Commission
- The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)



- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
- The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine
- The American College of Physicians
- The Inter-Agency Pain Management Best Practices Task Force

Additionally, the World Health Organization recognizes acupuncture as a safe and effective treatment for over 100 conditions, including pain, mental health concerns like depression and insomnia, and reproductive health challenges.

Removing access to this vital, non-pharmacologic, and cost-effective care would be a significant setback—especially as California continues to combat the intertwined crises of chronic pain and opioid addiction. The impact would fall disproportionately on low-income and underserved communities, widening existing health disparities and undermining the state's broader goals for health equity.

Access to integrative, holistic care should not be a privilege—it should be a core part of our public health system. Preserving acupuncture benefits in Medi-Cal aligns with California's commitment to health equity, innovation, and fiscal responsibility.

Ensuring access to acupuncture is more than a health care policy—it's a smart fiscal strategy that improves outcomes and reduces long-term costs.

We respectfully urge you to reject the proposed elimination of acupuncture benefits and ensure that this vital, effective, affordable care remains available to all Californians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lin Yang", written in a cursive style.

Dr. Lin Yang, DAOM, L.Ac  
Chair  
California Acupuncture Coalition  
CACRotatingChair@gmail.com

cc: The honorable Assembly Health Chair Mia Bonta  
Senate Health Chair Caroline Menjivar  
API Caucus Chair Mike Fong  
Governor Gavin Newsom  
Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis  
Assembly Business and Professions committee Chair Marc Berman  
Senate Business, Professions and Economic Development Committee Chair Angelique Ashby