



May 20, 2025

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

The Honorable Dawn Addis
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee #1
1021 O Street, Room 4120
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Oppose Elimination of Acupuncture as a Medi-Cal Optional Benefit

Dear Chairs Gabriel and Addis:

The California Asian American & Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus (AAPILC) opposes the Governor's proposal to eliminate acupuncture as a Medi-Cal optional benefit beginning January 1, 2026.

There has been numerous clinical trials and research documenting the efficacy of acupuncture for pain management, wellness care (e.g., after surgery), and treatment for a number ailments, including cancer, infertility, and mental health issues. For generations of Asian American and Pacific Islander individuals, especially those with limited English proficiency, or long-standing cultural ties to traditional medicine, acupuncture provides a trusted, effective alternative to pharmacological treatments such as opioids.

Acupuncture was restored as a Medi-Cal benefit in 2016, at a cost of \$9 million annually, but the benefits of acupuncture reduce costs in other areas, such as frequent doctor visits, surgery, or emergency care. Eliminating the benefit would be detrimental to the health of thousands of already-underserved Medi-Cal patients, especially those with chronic pain.

The AAPILC respectfully urges rejection of the elimination of acupuncture as an optional benefit. Acupuncture should not be a privilege for those who can afford to pay out of pocket. Keeping it as a Medi-Cal benefit would ensure equitable access. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mike Fong
Chair, AAPI Legislative Caucus

Stephanie Nguyen
Assembly Vice Chair, AAPI Legislative Caucus