

CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

CSA1 Bill Id:AB 960 Author:(Garcia)

As Amended Ver:August 25, 2025

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Requires a *general acute care hospital (GACH)* to allow a patient with physical, intellectual, or developmental disabilities; cognitive impairment, including dementia; or another disability, to have a family or friend caregiver with them as needed unless hospital reasonably determines that the presence of a particular visitor would endanger the health or safety of the visitor, a patient, a member of the health facility staff, or other visitor to the health facility, or would significantly disrupt the operations of the facility. Clarifies that if circumstances require a hospital to restrict visitor access due to health or safety concerns, the hospitals' alternative visitation protocols allow visitation *to the greatest extent possible* to allow the patient to fully and equally benefit from any goods, services, or facilities offered by the hospital.

Senate Amendments

Clarify that this bill does not prohibit restrictions to visitation policies implemented during a state of emergency declared by the Governor, a health emergency declared by the State Public Health Officer, or a local health emergency declared by a local health officer to limit contact with patients or staff at a GACH in order to prevent or limit the spread of a contagious, infectious, or communicable disease.

COMMENTS

Background. According to the Alzheimer's Association, dementia is an overall term for a particular group of symptoms. The characteristic symptoms of dementia are difficulties with memory, language, problem-solving, and other thinking skills that affect a person's ability to perform everyday activities. Changes to the brain cause dementia, and many different brain changes can lead to dementia. Alzheimer's is the most common cause of dementia, accounting for an estimated 60% to 80% of cases. Most individuals also have the brain changes of one or more other causes of dementia. This is called mixed pathologies, and if recognized during life, is called mixed dementia. Nearly seven million Americans are living with Alzheimer's. By 2050, this number is projected to rise to nearly 13 million. Alzheimer's disease was the fifth-leading cause of death among people age 65 and older in 2021. An estimated 6.9 million Americans age 65 and older are living with Alzheimer's in 2024. Seventy-three percent are age 75 or older. About one in nine people age 65 and older (10.9%) has Alzheimer's. Almost two-thirds of Americans with Alzheimer's are women. Older Black Americans are about twice as likely to have Alzheimer's or other dementias as older whites. Older Hispanics are about one and one-half times as likely to have Alzheimer's or other dementias as older whites.

Federal Law. The Patient Bill of Rights, established as part of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, as well as federal regulations outlining a hospitals' ability to receive Medicaid payments, require a hospital to have written policies and procedures regarding the visitation rights of patients, including those setting forth any clinically necessary or reasonable restriction or limitation that the hospital may need to place on such rights and the reasons for the clinical restriction or limitation. A hospital must meet the following requirements:

- 1) Inform each patient (or support person, where appropriate) of their visitation rights, including any clinical restriction or limitation on such rights;
- 2) Inform each patient (or support person, where appropriate) of the right, subject their consent, to receive the visitors whom they designate, including, but not limited to, a spouse, a domestic partner (including a same-sex domestic partner), another family member, or a friend, and their right to withdraw or deny such consent at any time;
- 3) Not restrict, limit, or otherwise deny visitation privileges on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability; and,
- 4) Ensure that all visitors enjoy full and equal visitation privileges consistent with patient preferences.

According to the Author

People with dementia rely heavily on friends and family caregivers to be their voice, to help them maintain a good quality of life, and to remain a part of our communities. When visiting the hospital, people with dementia need to have access to a friend and family caregiver throughout the duration of their stay. Caregivers are an essential part of a dementia care team, and restricting access will cause harm to people with dementia. The author argues, not only do they provide emotional and physical support, but they provide information, facilitate communication, and ensure the needs of the person with dementia are advocated for and met during the hospital stay. They are also the person who will continue to provide and support the health care of the person after they leave the hospital. The author concludes they should be treated as a valuable member of the support team, instead of being restricted to standard visitation hours.

Arguments in Support

The Alzheimer's Association (AA) supports this bill and states that the policy in this bill is a critical support for patients with dementia. This provides them with a sense of familiarity which reduces anxiety. It will decrease the risk that patients become agitated and minimizes the likelihood that they get confused or disoriented. This accommodation is needed while patients are in what can feel like an unfamiliar environment. This item supports the patient's emotional wellbeing, which is closely linked to outcomes in their physical health. AA concludes that this bill requires a health facility to allow a patient with demonstrated dementia needs to have access to people who bring them comfort with reasonable provisions to assist facilities with implementation.

AARP California supports this bill and states that hospital stays can be stressful and overwhelming for anyone, and patients with Alzheimer's or dementia needs – who experience twice as many hospital stays per year as other older adults – are particularly vulnerable in these situations. They may find themselves confused, frightened, and unable to communicate their needs. While people with dementia are likely to experience further cognitive decline during hospitalization, it is also known that the presence of family or friend caregiver can help patients with communication, meeting urgent needs, assisting with eating, and washing, and providing emotional support. AARP notes that as an organization they have long highlighted the value of consumer and family caregiver engagement and empowerment in all health care settings. However, caregivers are often restricted in accompanying people with dementia throughout hospital stays. AARP concludes that his bill would ensure that people with dementia have access to a friend or family caregiver while hospitalized.

Arguments in Opposition

None.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, the California Department of Public Health estimates annual costs of \$111,000 (Licensing and Certification Fund) for state operations during any event that requires state-wide restrictions on patient visitation due to health or safety concerns. This would cover staffing resources to verify facility compliance with the development of alternate visitation protocols, investigate related complaints, and ensure requirements for visitors are properly established and enforced.

VOTES:**ASM HEALTH: 16-0-0**

YES: Bonta, Chen, Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Rogers, Carrillo, Flora, Mark González, Krell, Patel, Patterson, Celeste Rodriguez, Sanchez, Schiavo, Sharp-Collins, Stefani

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 14-0-1

YES: Wicks, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Elhawary, Fong, Mark González, Hart, Pacheco, Pellerin, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

ABS, ABST OR NV: Sanchez

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 79-0-0

YES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

SENATE FLOOR: 40-0-0

YES: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Grove, Hurtado, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNERney, Menjivar, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Reyes, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

UPDATED

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