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American Association of Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture
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Unity of former CCAA and UCPCM

June 13, 2025

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
State of California Governor
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Protection of MediCal Acupuncture Benefits – Senate and Assembly Budget Framework
Notice of Support – American Association of Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture**

Dear Governor Newsom,

On behalf of the American Association of Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture, I am writing to express our strong support for the protection of MediCal Acupuncture benefits as expressed in the Senate and Assembly Budget Framework agreement.

Our association traces its roots to the first acupuncture organization officially registered in California. Our founding acupuncturists played a pivotal role in the legalization of acupuncture during the 1970s, laying the foundation for its integration into modern healthcare. Their dedication helped establish acupuncture as a widely accepted and effective treatment for pain management and a variety of other conditions. Today, acupuncture is practiced across the globe, has improved the lives of countless individuals, and continues to be a vital part of California's healthcare system.

The elimination of acupuncture from Medi-Cal would be devastating—for patients, providers, and public health across California. Removing this benefit would deprive low-income individuals of a vital, evidence-based treatment option, forcing them to either pay out of pocket or forgo care altogether. In many rural areas, acupuncturists serve as critical primary care providers for patients with limited access to other healthcare services.

The cost of providing acupuncture under Medi-Cal is relatively modest—approximately \$5.4 million annually, 13 million ongoing—yet it delivers a strong return on investment. Research consistently shows that acupuncture:

Effectively manages chronic pain and a variety of other conditions

Reduces reliance on high-cost interventions such as surgery, opioid prescriptions, and frequent physician visits

Improves patient outcomes, supports preventive care, and lowers emergency room utilization

Plays a crucial role in reducing the risk of opioid dependence



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A study conducted by UC Irvine provides valuable insight into acupuncture's potential to reduce healthcare costs. Involving over 16,000 breast cancer survivors, the study found that patients who received acupuncture experienced a 26% reduction in total healthcare expenses—amounting to an average savings of \$15,513 per patient. Notably, those who received more than 10 acupuncture treatments saw even greater cost savings compared to those with fewer sessions. The findings suggest that consistent and frequent acupuncture use is associated with significantly greater reductions in overall healthcare spending. [1].

The World Health Organization recognizes acupuncture as an effective treatment for more than 100 conditions—including pain, depression, insomnia, and reproductive-health challenges. As California confronts the intertwined crises of chronic disease and opioid addiction, acupuncture should be utilized more—not less.

Access to integrative, holistic care should not be a privilege reserved for those who can afford it—it should be a fundamental part of an equitable healthcare system. Preserving acupuncture benefits under Medi-Cal reflects California's commitment to health equity, cost-effective care, and innovative, patient-centered treatment options.

Once again, we are grateful for the Senate and Assembly Budget Framework agreement that protects Medi-Cal acupuncture benefits. We respectfully urge you to uphold this provision in the final budget agreement to ensure that this vital, accessible, and effective form of healthcare remains available to all Californians.

Sincerely,

Ying Li, L.Ac.

President

American Association of Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture

cc: Assembly Health Chair Mia Bonta
Senate Health Chair Caroline Menjivar
API Caucus Chair Mike Fong

1.Ng, D.Q., Lee, S., Lee, R.T. et al. Real-world impact of acupuncture on analgesics and healthcare resource utilization in breast cancer survivors with pain. BMC Med 22, 394 (2024)