California Medical Association
Physicians dedicated to the health of Californians

July 30, 2012

The Honorable Felipe Fuentes
Chair, Assembly Committee on Appropriations
State Capitol Room 2114
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SB 1483 (Steinberg)
CMA Position: CO-SPONSOR

Dear Assemblymember Fuentes:

The California Medical Association (CMA) is pleased to **co-sponsor SB 1483 (Steinberg)**, a bill to establish a physician health program in the state of California.

California is one of just a few states nationwide that do not currently have a physician health program to coordinate care for physicians suffering from mental health, behavioral health or substance abuse issues. From 1980 until 2007, the Medical Board of California (MBC) operated the Diversion Program to serve this purpose, but unfortunately that program was shuttered in 2007.

Without having a program in California, physicians who suffer from these issues and conditions often do not know where to go for help, and many of them end up continuing to practice while trying to 'deal with it' on their own. This presents a significant public health and public safety risk.

SB 1483 will set up a program, to be funded solely through physician license fees, to coordinate referrals for treatment and monitoring services for physicians who would enter the program voluntarily. The physician community believes that it is critical that we create and finance this effort ourselves, for our fellow physicians, in order to provide a single place for them to go when seeking information on and help acquiring treatment.

California is currently suffering a shortage of physicians, which will be compounded with the advent of health reform in 2014. It is critical that we protect and preserve those physicians currently practicing in California, and provide them with the same type of treatment assistance California currently provides to many other licensed professionals, including attorneys, pharmacists, nurses and veterinarians.

We thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Ginno
CMA Center for Government Relations

CC: Members, Assembly Appropriations Committee
Lisa Murawski, Consultant, Assembly Appropriations Committee
Michelle Baca, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus