



The David Geffen Center, Mid-City
Gleicher/Chen Health Center, Baldwin Hills
Long Beach Health Center
APLA Health – Olympic, Fairfax / Carthay Circle
Education Center, Baldwin Hills
Wilshire Dental Clinic, Downtown Los Angeles
Vance North Necessities of Life Program in eight locations
AIDS Walk Los Angeles

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January 31, 2020

Dr. Barbara Ferrer
Director, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
313 North Figueroa St. Room 806
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Dr. Ferrer:

APLA Health believes that Los Angeles County's escalating STD epidemic is at crisis level: the County contracting process is problematic and routinely disrupted by community politics, adequate government funding to address the epidemic is not forthcoming, and service delivery is clearly failing to reach the most impacted populations.

APLA Health also believes the County is neglecting opportunities to maximize all available funding sources for STD programs and services.

As you know, STD testing and treatment have been siloed from primary health care for decades. With the adoption of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and California's expansion of its Medi-Cal program, more Californians are eligible for free or low-cost health insurance than ever before. This unprecedented expansion of health care coverage presents us with a unique opportunity to expand resources for STD testing and treatment – and link patients accessing STD services to primary care.

Los Angeles County must double down on efforts to require third-party billing for STD testing and treatment. Accessing third-party payment through Medi-Cal and private health coverage for STD testing and treatment will be complicated and, for some providers, extremely difficult. Los Angeles County should explore all avenues to ensure that third-party billing in no way limits access to high-quality STD testing and treatment and that financial barriers to testing and treatment (e.g., premiums, copays, deductibles, etc.) are adequately addressed. This will expand resources for STDs far beyond what we can reasonably expect from local, state or federal government.

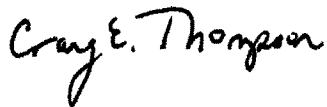
At the same time, we must take advantage of new opportunities to accelerate STD testing and treatment. The advent of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) provides an opportunity to transition highly-impacted STD clients to PrEP when appropriate, and to screen PrEP users regularly for STDs, as per guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). New models for sexual health services, including STD

express clinics, can expand access to and facilitate testing and treatment for individuals at risk of STDs.

APLA Health is calling on you to convene an emergency meeting of County officials and community partners now, to develop comprehensive long-term solutions to the County's STD epidemic. We must resolve common difficulties, identify mutually beneficial solutions and innovative approaches, and implement realistic and enforceable practices to expand reimbursement for STD testing and treatment across Los Angeles County. It is our hope these discussions will result in a system that is equitable to patients and providers and provides a comparable level of service in all areas of the county.

We look forward to your swift response.

Sincerely,



Craig E. Thompson
Chief Executive Officer

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