Life-Saving Changes for Dialysis Patients

Three times each and every week, 80,000 Californians with End Stage Renal Disease go to one of more than 600 commercial dialysis centers in the state where they spend three to four hours connected to a machine that removes their blood, cleans it, and returns it to their bodies. Dialysis literally is what keeps them alive, and they must continue the treatment for the rest of their lives or until they receive a kidney transplant.

Because the lives of these fellow Californians are so dependent on dialysis that is done both safely and effectively, we give our absolute support to the Protect the Lives of Dialysis Patients Act, an initiative appearing on the Nov. 3 ballot. This initiative will make common-sense improvements to dialysis treatment that will protect some of the most medically vulnerable people in our society.

The initiative does four major things:

First, it requires a physician or nurse practitioner to be in the clinic any time patients are being treated, which is not currently required. Dialysis is a dangerous procedure, and if something goes wrong, a doctor or highly trained nurse should be nearby.

Second, dialysis patients are prone to infections from their treatments that can lead to more serious illnesses or even death. This initiative requires clinics to report accurate data on infections to the state and federal governments so problems can be identified and solved to
protect patients.

Third, like all other life-saving health care facilities, the initiative says the dialysis corporations cannot close clinics or reduce their services unless approved by the state. This also is designed to protect patients, particularly in rural communities, to make sure they have access to dialysis treatment, and to stop the dialysis corporations from using closures to pad their bottom line.

Fourth, it prohibits clinics from discriminating against patients because of the type of insurance they have, and it protects patients in every clinic. No matter if they are located in a wealthy neighborhood or a poor, rural, Black or Brown community, all clinics will be required to have a doctor or nurse practitioner on site, all clinics will be required to report their infection rates to the state and federal governments, and all dialysis corporations will be prohibited from discriminating against patients because of the type of insurance they have.

Don’t listen when the dialysis industry claims the initiative will create huge new costs or say patients will be harmed or claim that it will create a shortage of doctors – those fake arguments are just designed to use patients and the coronavirus pandemic as scare tactics in their dishonest public relations campaign. The fact is, these corporations can easily make these changes and still make hundreds of millions of dollars a year without disrupting our healthcare system.

Proposition 23 will make the changes we need to truly protect dialysis patients. We urge you to vote YES!
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