Life-Saving Changes for Dialysis Patients

Three times 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 several 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 done both safely and effectively, we must give our absolute support to the Protect the Lives of Dialysis Patients Act on the Nov. 8 ballot. This initiative makes common-sense improvements to dialysis treatment to protect some of the most medically vulnerable Californians.

The initiative does five major things:

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

Second, as dialysis patients are prone to infections that can lead to more serious illnesses or even death, it requires clinics to report data on infections to the state so problems can be identified and solved to better protect patients.

Third, as life-saving health care facilities, it requires dialysis corporations to get approval from the state before closing clinics or reducing services. This will protect access to dialysis treatment, particularly for patients in rural communities.

Fourth, it prohibits clinics from discriminating against patients because of their type of insurance and protects patients in every clinic. Whether in a wealthy neighborhood or a poor, rural, Black or Brown
community, all clinics will be required to have a doctor or other highly trained clinician on-site and to report their infection rates, and all dialysis corporations will be prohibited from discriminating against patients based on insurance type.

Fifth, it increases transparency and helps patients make informed decisions for their care by requiring clinics and dialysis corporations to disclose information on ownership. As joint ventures between dialysis clinics and doctors become more common, improved transparency is needed to allow stakeholders and policy makers to study the effects of physician ownership.

Don't fall for big dialysis corporations' claims that this initiative will create huge new costs, harm patients, or create a shortage of doctors—those fake arguments are just designed as scare tactics in their dishonest public relations campaign. The fact is these corporations can easily make these changes and still profit hundreds of millions of dollars a year without disrupting our healthcare system.

Proposition 29 will make the changes we need to truly protect dialysis patients. We urge you to vote YES!

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REVEREND KISHEEN W. TULLOSS, President of the Baptist Ministers Conference of Los Angeles

CECILIA GOMEZ-GONZALEZ, Dialysis Patient Advocate