January 9, 2012

Dr. Peter MacDougall  
Chair, Task Force on Student Success  
California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office  
1102 Q Street  
Sacramento, CA 95811  

Dear Dr. MacDougall:

On behalf of more than 400 member hospitals, health systems and post-acute-care providers, the California Hospital Association (CHA) is writing in support of the final report of the California Community Colleges Task Force on Student Success. Improving college completion rates is an economic imperative for California, and community colleges play the most critical role in meeting future workforce needs with more than 2.6 million students enrolled in one of the 112 colleges across our state.

The California Community Colleges system currently educates many health care workers, including nurses, radiology technologists and medical laboratory technicians. While the demand for these workers is expected to grow over the next decade, the community colleges’ ability to meet that demand is hampered by budget cuts, limited program capacity and unacceptable student completion rates. A study by the Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy found that only three in 10 students earned a certificate or degree, or transferred to a four-year institution after six years, and these rates were even lower for African-American and Latino students.

CHA is pleased that the taskforce recommendations highlight proven strategies that help students reach their college goals. We support the taskforce’s commitment to scale these proven strategies across the state to create real improvement in student success.

Because of CHA’s work and commitment to developing strategies that address the need to develop a highly skilled, culturally diverse, health care workforce, we find the most promise in the following recommendations:

- **Need for basic skills reform**: As the taskforce report states, “A vast majority of first-time students entering the California Community Colleges (CCC) are underprepared for college-level work. In the CCCs, 70 to 90 percent of first-time students who take an assessment test require remediation in English, math, or both.” Failure to address the basic skill needs of the state will have lasting negative impacts on hundreds of thousands of Californians, as well as the state’s economy and social climate. CHA strongly supports Recommendation 5.1. In particular, contextualized learning in health care career technical education programs has been very successful.
Additionally, in many sectors, including health care, employers report that students entering the workplace are ill prepared and require a significant amount of on-the-job training. It is critical that community colleges not only collaborate with state agencies such as the State Board of Education and the California Department of Education but also with other statewide efforts to define and address college and career readiness. In addition, it is critical that they seek input from employers regarding the skill sets required for students to be career ready for a particular industry.

- **Re-examination of K-12 budgetary flex**: The Governor and Legislature should re-examine implementation of K-12 budgetary flexibility for adult education funds, and the resulting redirection of funds intended to support these programs, to determine if this practice is consistent with California’s current social and economic needs. For example, although at lower levels than in recent history, health care is still one sector that has added jobs, even during the economic recession. Health care workers, such as phlebotomists, are often trained in adult education programs. However, as a result of K-12 budgetary flex for adult education, as well as for other programs such as the Health Workforce Initiative, there are significantly less resources for this type of training. This is concerning to hospitals which rely on these programs for skilled candidates.

- **Enable efficient statewide leadership and increase coordination among colleges**: The state should promote greater state-level support and coordination, including implementation of a new goal-setting framework so California’s diverse community colleges can function more as a system. This recommendation is essential to a more efficient use of resources and increased success among students.

Finally, while we recognize that, due to time constraints, the taskforce did not specifically address career technical education, attention to that aspect of the community college mission is critical. As noted above, a large portion of the health care workforce is educated through community college career technical education programs and approximately 56 percent of students in California Community Colleges are enrolled in workforce/career technical programs. Due to the high cost and rigor of these programs, career technical education students face heightened challenges. Student success includes ensuring training and education that fully prepares students for highly skilled health care jobs.

We look forward to continuing our work with the Chancellor’s Office and improving the educational outcomes of California Community College students and the workforce preparedness of California.

Sincerely,

C. Duane Dauner  
President/CEO  
California Hospital Association

cc: Chancellor Jack Scott, California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office  
Board of Governors for California Community Colleges