March 22, 2021

The Honorable Richard Pan, MD
Chairman
Senate Committee on Health
State Capitol, Room 2191 Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 371, Health Information Technology - SUPPORT as amended on March 15, 2021

Dear Chairman Pan:

On behalf of OCHIN, I am pleased to support SB 371 (Caballero), as amended on March 15, 2021, which would establish a framework to support health care data exchange in California by reestablishing data exchange leadership within the California Health and Human Services Agency, operationalizing bidirectional access to public health data, and positioning the state to secure and optimize federal funding. Aligning California’s health information exchange strategy and requirements for health data exchange drives improved patient health outcomes and advances health equity by lowering costs and administrative burdens for community-based providers and the patients they serve.

OCHIN is a national, nonprofit community-based health information technology and research network, as well as a national leader in promoting high-quality health care in historically underserved communities across the country. OCHIN’s network of community providers includes 31 California members that completed 2.8 million encounters in 2020. Of these total encounters, 36.9% were conducted via telehealth, demonstrating how innovation and technology provide an essential bridge for patients who face barriers to accessing care in-person, particularly those in underserved communities. OCHIN continues to be a leader in advancing secure standardized data health exchange and, as of February 2, 2021, has delivered 729,674 COVID-19 electronic reports to public health jurisdictions nationwide.

OCHIN supports improvements to health information exchange and the movement of data to ensure care coordination and patient access to their health records. Everyone has the right to a complete and accurate medical record. Harmonizing state efforts with national networks will reduce the administrative burden, complexity, and costs on community-based providers, including those in underserved communities. A high priority should be placed on bidirectional exchanges and integration into the provider workflow. While there is significant health information exchange happening today in California, data transport through the health information exchange starts with high-quality data entered into high-quality health record systems. As a result, it is critical that providers have the resources to adopt or upgrade electronic health record systems that facilitate data exchange. OCHIN supports assisting communities and providers, particularly those in underserved areas who are not participating or are getting left behind, to onboard to health information exchanges, either through national networks, vendor-based/electronic health record-based exchanges, or health information exchange organizations (HIOs).
For all these reasons, we strongly support SB 371. Please contact me at stollj@ochin.org should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Stoll

Executive Vice President

Government Relations & Public Affairs

cc: Members, Senate Committee on Health
The Honorable Anna Caballero