



July 15, 2019

Dr. Mark Ghaly, Agency Secretary
California Health and Human Services Agency (CHHS)
1600 9th Street Room 460
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: CalQualityCare.org

Dear Dr. Ghaly:

We are writing on behalf of the California Collaborative for Long Term Services & Supports to ask that you move the CalQualityCare.org website to the Office of the Patient Advocate and fund it through the OPA trust fund. This can be accomplished by either a Jr. budget bill this summer or administrative action.

As you are aware, the California state Senate and Assembly budget subcommittees passed the CalQualityCare.org's budget request of \$500,000 to move the website to OPA and fund it out of the OPA trust fund. Unfortunately, agency staff did not support the budget request.

Currently OPA hosts the hospital and two medical group ratings for consumers but does not have a website on LTSS. We want the LTSS website to be placed at OPA and made a part of the Governor's Initiatives on Aging.

The website was developed by the University of California San Francisco and funded by the California Health Care Foundation for 15 years but funding is no longer available. Briefly the website:

- Provides information on all 20,000 licensed California LTSS providers: nursing homes, hospice, home health, residential care for children and adults and developmentally disabled, and other providers.

- It provides detailed information and a five-level rating for nursing homes, home health, hospice, ICF/DD – which the state does not provide.
- It is comprehensive and easy to use, bringing together information from three federal and two state websites and other government and accreditation sources into a single portal for LTSS information.
- CalQualityCare.org is a source of free unbiased government information from reliable government sources that is tailored for CA – the federal websites can be misleading because they do not include state deficiencies and citations for poor quality care (up to \$100,000).
- CalQualityCare.org augments the state websites by adding federal staffing data, quality measures such as readmission rates, with a rating that takes federal and state data into account.

There is good evidence that 5-star rating systems make a difference for both consumer and provider behavior, which is why OPA promotes 5-star systems on its site, but the California DPH nursing home site shows only ownership and deficiency information. There is also evidence that use of a good website can reduce hospital days and can channel patients to better nursing homes, thus reducing readmissions.

The website is a valuable tool for Ombudsman and many other consumer organizations throughout the state including: CA Ombudsman Association, Northern and Southern CA Alzheimer's associations, Family Caregiver Alliance, Disability Rights, CA, AARP, California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform, SEIU state Council, and other organizations that work with the state's more than 2 million long term care users.

The website design and development has already been completed with several million dollars of investment – it is ready to go and can be a central part of the Governor's new Initiative on Aging.

We urge you to take action to ensure access to this valuable resource.

Sincerely,



Amber C. Christ, JD, *Vice Chair for Policy*
California Collaborative for Long Term Services and Supports
Directing Attorney, Justice in Aging