

**HEALTH COMMISSION
RESOLUTION No 19-8**

**APPROVING CHANGES TO THE SLIDING SCALE PROGRAM AND ENDORSING CHANGES
TO PATIENT BILLING AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

WHEREAS, SFDPH is dedicated to meeting the highest standards in all aspects of patient care, including protecting the financial well-being of its clients and patients; and

WHEREAS, Hospital billing has become a significant public policy issue across the country, with many patients facing unmanageable medical costs resulting from hospital visits; and

WHEREAS, One factor contributing to patient financial problems in health care is the practice known as “balance billing,” where a patient’s insurer covers only a portion of a hospital bill and the patient becomes responsible for the remainder; and

WHEREAS, In addition to causing financial hardship, the practice of balance billing can cause stress, anxiety and frustration for patients as they are forced to navigate complex financial and administrative requirements of insurance providers and hospitals in resolving billing issues; and

WHEREAS, in recent weeks and months there has been increased scrutiny on the practice of balance billing at Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center (ZSFG), including the stories of patients who received large bills for services at ZSFG; and

WHEREAS, Less than 2 percent of patients at ZSFG are potentially subject to balance billing under current law, policies and procedures; and

WHEREAS, Despite the relative infrequency of this practice at ZSFG, for those individuals impacted by balance billing, the financial hardship and stress of the experience are very real; and

WHEREAS, it has become clear that ZSFG’s existing policies do not fully take into account the burden imposed on patients affected; and

WHEREAS, on February 1, 2019, Mayor London Breed announced a temporary hold on the practice of balance billing and directed SFDPH to undertake a comprehensive 90-day review of its billing and collections policies; and

WHEREAS, At the direction of Mayor Breed and the Health Commission SFDPH has completed its review and developed a set of recommendations to significantly reduce financial burdens on patients, including revisions to the Sliding Scale Policy previously adopted by the Health Commission;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Health Commission approves proposed changes to the Sliding Scale Policy to expand eligibility for the program and further reduce out-of-pocket expenses for the lowest income patients; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Health Commission endorses the concept of establishing new policies and procedure to require that insured patients receiving services at ZSFG out-of-network will be billed no more than the cost sharing the patient would pay for the same services at an in-network, contracted hospital under the patient's insurance policy; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Health Commission endorses the concept of establishing income-based out-of-pocket maximum payment levels for patients at ZSFG.

I hereby certify that the San Francisco Health Commission at its meeting of April 16, 2019 adopted the foregoing resolution.

Mark Morewitz
Executive Secretary to the Health Commission

