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Steve Juarez, Associate Vice President and Director**SENATE FLOOR ALERT**
AB 2616 (Skinner) – Senate Third Reading – File #323

August 19, 2014

TO: Members of the California State Senate

Re: AB 2616 (Skinner), as Amended on August 18, 2014
Position: OPPOSE

The University of California (UC) opposes AB 2616, which would establish a legal presumption for certain hospital employees in the workers' compensation system that any Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* skin infection (MRSA) is caused by their employment.

Workers Compensation System is Working: The workers compensation system is designed to protect employees from workplace injury. There is no evidence that hospital workers currently filing claims for injuries are being denied benefits under the existing system. In fact, historical workers compensation claims data for employees at the UC medical centers demonstrate that claims filed for workplace injuries are generally accepted.

Hospital Infections Declining: Proponents of AB 2616 argue that the establishment of a presumption for these injuries is needed because hospital workers have an increased likelihood of exposure to MRSA. Although the spread of MRSA and hospital acquired infections is a national priority, the percent of healthcare workers affected is small and diminishing. In the past decade, infection prevention in our hospitals has become such a high priority that there has been a national decline in MRSA rates by half. There is no need for a presumption for an issue with such narrow scope.

MRSA Multiple Settings: Acquisition of MRSA at a healthcare facility cannot be presumed. Healthcare professionals live in the community and often work at more than one healthcare setting. There are more cases of community acquired MRSA than there are of MRSA acquired within healthcare facilities. In fact, the majority of patients that present to the ER with skin infections have no healthcare contact. Community-associated MRSA has been noted in a variety of community settings, including schools, child care settings, gyms, sport teams, and retail meat.

First Private Employer Presumption: Although there is a history of legal presumptions being applied to certain public employees and safety officers, AB 2616 establishes a costly precedent by creating the first such presumption to *private sector* employees who face specific types of work-related risks. Employees in a variety of occupations face inherent employment risks. The current workers' compensation system is a fair standard that is applied to all injuries for all other employees.

UC urges a "NO" vote. Should you have any questions concerning the University's position on this bill, please do not hesitate to contact Angela M. Gilliard, JD Legislative Director at (916) 445-9924.

UC urges a "NO" vote on AB 2616 (Skinner)