SATURDAY, JANUARY 15, 2022 " LATIMES.COM/CALIFORNIA

### State bill aims to ban abusive doctors

Legislation comes after Times report on board's reinstatement of 10 physicians.

By Jack Dolan, Brittny Mejia and Kim Christensen

Doctors who are convicted of sexually abusing patients would be permanently banned from practicing medicine in California under a bill introduced this week by state legislators.

The move comes a month after a Times investigation found that the Medical Board of California had reinstated 10 physicians since 2013 who lost their licenses for sexual misconduct. They included two doctors who abused teenage girls and one who beat two female patients when they reported him for sexually exploiting them.

tients when they reported him for sexually exploiting them.

"I read that article and my stomach turned. This is the sort of stuff you see in horror movies," said the bill's lead author. Assemblywoman Akilah Weber (D-San Diego), who is an obstetrician/gynecologist. "I was shocked. I was very concerned for patients and very concerned for patients and very concerned for patients and very concerned for the medical profession itself."

The measure would be a major overhaul of current practice, which patients and healtheare advocates contend favors leniency for doctors and provides victims of sexual misconduct no voice in the disciplinary process.

The change would take the decision to reinstate such doctors out of the hands of the Medical Board and "make it very clear that this is something we will not clerate in California," Weber said.
Under the bill, any doctor

this is a colored to leave in California, ber said.

Under the bill, any doctor who is criminally convicted for sexual misconduct with patients—as were several in [See Doctors, B4]

### **CORONAVIRUS IN CALIFORNIA**



IRFAN KHAN Los Angeles TH REGISTERED NURSE Zachary Lucero evaluates a patient at Arrowhead Regional Medical Center on Tuesday. By midweek, California's hospitalization total for all reasons was just shy of last winter's peak.

## **Emergency rooms are** nearing 'crisis levels'

Latest wave likely to bring weeks of strain in hospitals

By Luke Money, Rong-Gong Lin II and Hayley Smith

Emergency rooms are nearing crisis levels in parts of California, and officials are forecasting weeks of strain in hospitals even as there are glimmers of hope the Omicron wave may soon peak in the northern part of the state.

state.

There is unprecedented spread of the coronavirus in California; never before in the pandemic have so many people been simultaneously infected.

And despite signs that Omicron is less likely to require patients to need mechanical help to breathe, the extraordinarily high case rate — 2½

times last winter's peak—is still leaving hospitals so inundated that
scheduled surgeries are being canceled and ambulances are facing long
delays dropping off patients.

"We are seeing near-crisis levels of
[emergency department] overcrowding in certain areas," Dr. Erica Pan,
the state epidemiologist, said in a
briefing to the California Medical
ASSN.

briefing to the California масшеса Assn.

By midweek, California was reporting 52,400 hospitalizations for all reasons, just shy of the peak of 53,000 recorded at the height of last winter's surge. LA. County was also approaching its peak; on Thursday, it had about 15,000 people hospitalized for all reasons, approaching the pandemic high of nearly 16,500 set last

winter, "when most hospitals were frankly overwhelmed," said county Public Health Director Barbara Ferrer.

Overall demand for emergency care is "causing a huge stress on our emergency rooms," Pan said. "With healthcare staffing shortages on the inpatient ward, it's harder to admit patients. And if you don't have enough nurses to take care of those patients, then there's a lot of backlog in the [emergency department] as well."

well."
That then results in ambulances kept waiting in front of hospitals, delaying crews' ability to respond to new 911 calls.
The rate of coronavirus spread is [See Hospitals, B2]

### L.A. schools chief tries to reassure

With high virus rates and 130,000 students absent, Carvalho says campuses are safe.

By Melissa Gomez and Howard Blume

Incoming Los Angeles Unified Supt. Alberto Carvalho, who visited Friday as officials reported a 66.8% as officials reported a 66.8% acrage student absentee rate, urged parents to send their children to school if they are not sick, saying campuses are safe and he fully supports the district's coronavirus safety measures.

"They are safe places because of the protective measures that are in place here," said Carvalho, during a wellower with the same that they are safe places because of the protective measures that are in place here, said Carvalho, during a wellower with the same that they have been as the same that they need to bring kids to school."

All schools have remained open for in-person learning this week.

About half of the 130,000 student absences are accounted for by those who tested positive for the coronavirus in the week before the start of the term. Others may have tested positive or had symptoms, but the information was not uploaded to the district's regarding how many families are choosing to keep students home out of caution acase numbers remain at record rates due to the Omicron variant.

Carvalho said the issues confronting LAUSD amid surging coronavirus rates are also hitting Miami-Dade County Public Schools, the district he is leaving causing elevated student absence.

district he is leaving, called elevated student absences [See LAUSD, B2]

 $\overline{\textbf{MAYOR}} \ Eric \ Garcetti \ said \ that \ "quite often," \ tough \ action \ supported \ by elected \ officials \ and \ police leaders \ against \ errant \ officers \ never \ materializes.$ 

LAPD discipline questioned

### Mayor orders review of punishments in police shootings that

violated policy. By Kevin Rector

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti on Thursday ques-tioned whether LAPD offi-cers who shoot people are sufficiently punished when the shootings violate de-partment policies, ordering

a review of such cases going back years.

Garcetti said that "quite often," stiff penalties supported by elected officials and police leaders never materialize in such cases because discipline panels hand down lesser penalties — sometimes leaving officers whom officials want to fire on the force.

Citing that and a report by the LAPD's inspector general last year that found newer, all-civilian discipline panels have been even more

lenient on errant officers, Garcetti said he had ordered the inspector general to assess the issue once more—this time producing a public report that will outline the discipline received by officers found to have broken policy in shootings in recent years, as well as the outcomes of any appeals they made to those punishments. During an end-of-year news conference on crime and policing in 2021 that covered an uptick in homicides

AGUSTIN GURZA, 1948 - 2022

## Times columnist, critic had a passion for music

ormer Los Angeles Times columnist Agustin Gurza, a one-time record store owner who became a groundbreaking Chronicler of Latino life in Southern California and one of the country's leading critics and historians of Spanish-language music, has died.

Gurza died Saturday morning after suffering a heart attack, according to his wife of 19 years, Rosie Caballero Gurza. He was 73.

Gurza was a 20-something UC Berkeley graduate when he stepped into the office of then-LA. Times music editor Robert Hilburn in 1978, looking for a reporting job. Hilburn didn't need a reporter, but he was desperate to find someone to write reviews. He told him [See Gurza, B5]



TRAILBLAZER

Gurza was among the first Latino col-umnists in Orange County, inspiring a generation of young Latino journalists

Omicron delays homeless count in L.A. County

Homeless Services Authority postpones annual census by a month, citing risks posed by variant. B3

Men accused of operating illegal money transfers

Indictment charging two Chinese citizens alleges business used proceeds from romance scams for U.S. funds. B3

Woman is in critical condition after police say homeless man hit her while she waited at Union Station. B4

AGUSTIN GURZA, 1948 - 2022

### Loved boleros but embraced rap too

to pick a record and where words.

"But I've never done a review," said Gurza.

"But you care about music. That's all that matters,"
Hilbum recalls saying.

Gurza delivered the review of a band called the Sal

Figure 3 and course.

Figure 3 and course about must.

Gurza dedivered the save of the save of others over the next few of others of other next few of others of other next few of other next few

[Gurza, from Bi] rooms, offices and garages with thousands of records, ranging from his rock favorites such as Bob Dylan and view," sald Gurza, the Beatles to Latin music

# OBITUARY NOTICES



CENCEL, Joseph A

Joseph Arthur (Ant I Coreci age 93, 1

Ant is survived by Janet Centrel his wife of 50 years, his Daughter and Son in law, Rence and Mark Dobbin, if of 1 Laguan Singels his 2 Gendrostor.

And is survived by Janet Centrel his yellow of 1 Laguan Singels his 2 Gendrostor.

Many nices and mephews had the privilege of Calling him Uncle along with dear one; who shared life and called him felend.

And was been on August 6, 1928 in and Alartha Gendro prevent Sophy and Janet 1 Laguan Singels and a degree in Exercical Engineering, Serving in the Airforce Hastonal Guard he was Callet to active duty during the carried of the Core of the C





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