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October 2, 2007

The Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Don Perata
President Pro Tem, California State Senate
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Fabian Nunez
Speaker, California State Assembly
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger, Senator Perata and Speaker Nunez:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft language dated 09-28-2007, 5:01 PM . As you know, the majority of uninsured Californians are Latinos – working but poor – who have little to no access to affordable, quality health care coverage. Latino Coalition for a Healthy California is committed to health care reform this year and looks forward to the opportunity to work with you to make this a reality. Below are some broad-based as well as specific comments based on the 09-28-2007 draft language.

Affordability

We look forward to working with you to develop standards that are accessible and more affordable than the \$5,000 deductible plan included in the draft language. Further, we urge you to consider limiting all health care expenses – premiums, co-pays, deductibles and other out-of-pocket expenses – to no more than 5% of a person's income.

Page 129 Section 12699.204 (a)(2) should be amended to read
For individuals with family incomes above 150 percent but less than or equal to ~~250~~ 300 percent of the federal poverty level, premiums, co-pays, deductibles and other out-of-pocket expenses shall not exceed 5 percent of the family income net of applicable deductions.

Cost-containment – The draft language contains little to no direction on cost-containment other than the medical loss ratio. We urge you to consider

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additional measures to reduce systemic and consumer costs.

Refundable and advance-able tax credits – We look forward to working with you to ensure that the advance-able tax credits are readily accessible for low-income, limited English proficient persons of color.

Benefits

While we understand that there is placeholder language governing minimum benefits, we urge you to consider basic primary and preventive care as part of the minimum benefits package. Further, the existing language does not include “benchmarks” for health care products thereby making it more difficult for consumer to choose the product that is most appropriate for their family.

Children

We fully support the provisions pertaining to covering all children regardless of immigration status.

Public Programs

We support the provisions in the draft language pertaining to public programs and commend you for increasing access to these programs.

Language Access

Over 45% of Californians speak a language other than English at home. Access to language appropriate services in medical settings has been proven to increase treatment compliance, improve patient satisfaction, and reduce costs. The draft language should reflect that medical settings receiving federal and state funds are mandated by federal and state laws (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964¹ and Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act²) and that all other health plans are governed by SB 853³ to provide language services.

Page 17, Section 12, 49452.9 (a) should be amended to read

On or after January 1, 2010, the school district may provide an information regarding health insurance requirements to the parent or guardian in the parent or guardian’s primary and/or preferred language of all the following:

Workforce

As you may know, the Governor through the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development has convened a Healthcare Workforce Diversity Advisory Council to develop recommendations regarding workforce development given the pending health care reform. We urge you to consider the recommendations that have been developed by this group and to focus on increasing the number of minorities in health professions. Underrepresented minority providers are more likely to practice in medically underserved areas and treat low-income and uninsured persons.

¹ Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination against persons with limited English proficiency.

² Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act, Government Code § 7290-7299.8, requires state agencies directly involved in the furnishing of information or the rendering of services to the public whereby contact is made with a substantial number of non-English-speaking people to employ a sufficient number of qualified bilingual persons.

³ SB 853 requires all health plans to have a language access plan.

Page 23, Section 14, 12803.2 (a)(1)(H) should be amended to read
An assessment of the capacity of the various health care professions and facilities to provide care to all Californians and a plan to increase the capacity of health care professions to reflect and meet the needs of the state's changing demographics.

Community Makeover Grants

We support grants that develop access to active and healthy living and would ask that the draft language be more explicit with respect to collaborating with community-based organizations.

Page 75, Article 3, Section 104705 (c)(2) should be amended to read
Coordinating with, at minimum, city, county, community-based organizations and school partners to facilitate community-level, multisector collaboration for the development and implementation of strategies to facilitate active living and healthy eating.

Enforceability

We look forward to working with you to develop an enforcement standard that does not unduly penalize working families. Consideration should be given to unemployment periods and hardship.

Other

Page 18 Section 12, 49452.9 (a)(b)(3) should be amended to read
Eligibility of public health programs and a toll free telephone number to request an application for Healthy Families, Medi-Cal or other government-subsidized health insurance program.

As I mentioned, the Board of Directors and I are looking forward to making health care reform a reality and are pleased to work with you to reach that goal. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (916) 448-3234 or cell (916) 747-5441.

Sincerely,



Lupe Alonzo-Diaz
Executive Director

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