March 31, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Health4All Elders: Full-Scope Medi-Cal for Low-Income Undocumented Elders (Ages 65+)

Dear Governor Newsom,

We, the undersigned organizations, write to respectfully request that your administration work with the legislature to expedite implementation of the Health4All Elders proposal, in light of the present COVID-19 public health emergency. This proposal, included in the Governor’s proposed 2020-2021 budget, would provide full-scope Medi-Cal to some 27,000 low-income undocumented seniors ages 65 and older by removing immigration status as an eligibility exclusion.

We commend the Administration’s leadership in responding swiftly and responsibly to both prevent the continued spread of the coronavirus as well as prepare our state for the health care and economic impacts that are to come. The California Department of Public Health’s COVID-19 resource page confirms that “some people are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. This includes older adults (65+)”¹. Our low-income elders are especially vulnerable. Seniors are more medically fragile and face barriers that make it harder for them to access care during times of social distancing, and undocumented seniors are even more at risk because they are excluded from many vital services altogether. There is no justification for leaving them out of comprehensive health care in the midst of this crisis. Besides humanitarian concerns, doing so will severely undermine efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19 throughout the nation.

Recent federal stimulus bills passed by Congress create an optional state Medicaid program that provides COVID-19 testing (and testing only) that will be funded with 100 percent federal Medicaid funds. However, this will be available only to uninsured people who meet immigrant eligibility requirements for federal Medicaid. This means it will exclude huge swaths of our immigrant communities, including the undocumented.

The COVID-19 pandemic makes starkly clear what we have expressed throughout the campaign for Health4All: that the health of each one of us is deeply interconnected with that of every Californian. We must recognize our shared humanity and care for each other, our neighbors, and those most vulnerable to falling through the gaps of our social safety net. Public programs should not exclude any group of people from primary and preventive care, especially when responding to a public health emergency. It is high time that our state moves toward parity in our Medi-Cal program for all who call California home.

Undocumented Californians are deeply rooted in our state and provide significant economic, familial, and cultural contributions to our communities. Almost two-thirds of undocumented Californians have lived in the U.S. for more than ten years,² and one in six of all California children have at least one undocumented parent.³ Undocumented Californians also play a significant role in the workplace across industries with

one in ten workers in California being undocumented.\textsuperscript{4} Undocumented immigrants contribute about $180 billion a year to our state’s economy, and bring out innovation and cultural diversity through entrepreneurship.\textsuperscript{5} Despite their vital place in California’s social and economic fabric, undocumented and uninsured Californians live sicker, die younger, and are one emergency away from financial ruin because they are locked out of comprehensive health care.

Moments of crisis call for swift response. We should accelerate expansion of health coverage for all seniors, who are a high risk group that need timely care. Our health care system is stronger when everyone is covered. Making Medi-Cal inclusive of all Californians builds on our state’s leadership in advancing universal coverage, a goal toward which the Newsom Administration has already taken significant strides.

For these reasons, we urge you and the legislature to act immediately to expedite the investment to remove the immigration status eligibility exclusion to full-scope Medi-Cal for undocumented Californians ages 65 and older.

If you have any questions, please contact Orville Thomas at the California Immigrant Policy Center at othomas@caimmigrant.org or Ronald Coleman at Health Access California at rcoleman@health-access.org.

Cc: The Honorable Holly Mitchell, Chair, Senate Budget Committee  
The Honorable Phil Ting, Chair, Assembly Budget Committee  
The Honorable Toni Atkins, President pro Tempore of the Senate  
The Honorable Anthony Rendon, Speaker of the Assembly

Sincerely,

ACLU California  
ACCE  
Alliance for a Better Community  
AltaMed  
ALPA Health  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice California  
Buen Vecino  
California Health Professional Student Alliance (CaHPSA)  
California Health+ Advocates  
California Immigrant Policy Center (CIPC)  
California Immigrant Youth Justice Alliance (CIYJA)  
California Labor Federation  
California Latinas for Reproductive Justice  
California Partnership  
California Physicians Alliance (CaPa)  

California Teamsters Public Affairs Council  
Campaign Against Racism LA  
Campaign for Immigrant Detention Reform  
Central Valley Immigrant Integration  
Collaborative (CVIIC)  
Centro Legal de la Raza  
Coachella Valley Immigrant Dignity Coalition  
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)  
Community Clinic Association of LA County  
Community Health Councils  
Community Health Initiative of Orange County  
Community Health Partnership  
Contra Costa Immigrant Rights Alliance  
Courageous Resistance  
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network (CPEHN)


California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation (CRLAF)
Drug Policy Alliance
Education and Leadership Foundation
Farmworker Justice
Fresno Barrios Unidos
Friends Committee and Legislation of California
Greenlining Institute
Health Access
Healthy Richmond
Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice (IC4IJ)
Inland Empire Immigrant Youth Collective
Indivisible CA Statestrong
Justice in Aging
Korean Community Center of East Bay
Long Beach Immigrant Rights Coalition (LBIRC)
Latino Coalition for a Healthy California (LCHC)
Latino Community Foundation
Maternal and Child Health Access
Mi Familia Vota
Mixteco/Indigena Organizing Project
Monument Impact
Multifaith ACTION Coalition
National Health Law Program
National Immigration Law Center
NCJW California Policy Advocacy Network
NextGen
#OCC Coalition
Pacifica Social Justice
PICO California
Pre-Health Dreamers
Prevention Institute
Proteus for Education, Employment and Community Services
RAC-CA
San Francisco AIDS Foundation
SAN South Asian Network
SEIU California
Services, Immigrant Rights and Education Network (SIREN)
Senior and Disability Action
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
The Children’s Partnership
Training Occupational Development Educating Communities (TODEC)
Undocuhealthleaders
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