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### NEW HEALTH ACCESS REPORT DETAILS DRAMATIC EXPANSIONS IN CALIFORNIA'S COUNTY HEALTH CARE SAFETY-NET

- *With Momentum from Affordable Care Act Coverage Expansions and California's Additional Efforts like #Health4AllKids, Counties Took Additional Steps in Past Year to Cover Remaining Uninsured, Regardless of Immigration Status.*
- ***This Monday, May 23rd, 35 Rural Counties Will Expand Eligibility and Offer a Primary Care Benefit to Some Undocumented Californians.***
- ***New Report by Health Access Highlights CA Counties that Took Major Steps to Expand and Improve their Safety Net Programs, including: Sacramento, Contra Costa, Monterey, Fresno, Los Angeles, Santa Clara. Report Also Predicts More Counties to Follow.***
- ***Press Conference Call TODAY at 11 am to Review Newly Released Report's Findings and Hear from County Leaders and Patients Benefiting from New Care Options. Call-In: 800-230-1085***

SACRAMENTO, Calif., (May 20, 2016) — Today, Health Access, the statewide health care consumer advocacy coalition, is releasing a new report detailing the dramatic changes to California's health care safety net programs at the county level. As the Affordable Care Act implementation has cut the number of uninsured Californians in half and the state has taken additional steps to cover all children, many California counties have extended their health care safety net programs to better serve the remaining uninsured. Counties have responded in various ways, from expanding coverage options to undocumented immigrants to providing new benefits to those already covered. A year ago, less than ten counties served undocumented Californians outside of the emergency room; on Monday, that number will expand to 47 counties.

On Monday, more Californians in 35 of the state's most rural counties will be able to benefit from the latest expansion of the County Medical Services Program (CMSP) which includes virtually all the counties north of the Bay Area and Sacramento to the Oregon border and many in the Sierra Nevada mountains and in the Central Valley. CMSP is expanding eligibility in its main indigent care program, including raising the income level from 200% to 300% of the federal poverty level (\$60,480 for a family of three). CMSP is also offering a new limited primary care benefit of three doctor visits and some pharmacy coverage to those in its program, as well as to residents (138-300% FPL) regardless of immigration status. Potentially

thousands of Californians will benefit from these expansions, as well as those of other counties that have launched similar pilot programs in the last year.

Health Access' new report, "[Profiles of Progress: California Counties Taking Steps to a More Inclusive and Smarter Safety-Net](#)," examines the expansion in the County Medical Services Program (CMSP) along with an in-depth analyses of how six other counties adjusted their safety net programs in response to changes in need and funding. These counties include: Contra Costa, Los Angeles, Monterey, Sacramento, Santa Clara, and Fresno.

"While the Affordable Care Act has gone a long way to provide new coverage options, it's left to California and its counties to figure out how to provide care for the remaining uninsured, including those explicitly excluded from federal help due to immigration status. Taking their responsibility seriously to provide health care to the remaining uninsured, more and more California counties are thankfully taking steps to a more inclusive and smarter safety-net," said Anthony Wright, executive director of Health Access California, the statewide health care consumer advocacy coalition. "This month's expansion in 35 rural counties of primary and preventive care is another step forward to a healthier California. Thousands of Californians are benefitting from these new pilot programs, but there's more work to do in many counties and statewide to further expand and strengthen our health system on which we all rely."

Speaking on a press conference call today are county leaders, advocates and individuals, including a County Supervisor that recognized the broader benefits and policy rationale for these expansions. "Contra Costa County understands that preventative health care for undocumented families improves the public health of all our county residents. It's a great investment to reduce healthcare costs and emergency room visits and is the right thing to do morally," said Contra Costa Supervisor, John Gioia.

"As a county supervisor, I have an obligation to protect the public's health by developing and implementing equitable and effective public policies, and appropriating commensurate resources. Ensuring everyone has access to health care constitutes the foundation upon which we advance that mission," said Sacramento County Supervisor, Phil Serna.

The report and the press conference call also highlight the grassroots advocacy that helped bring about this rapid change. "In a period of only about a year and a half, Sacramento community-based organizations went from basic research to advocacy to full implementation of a county-run affordable health care program for undocumented Sacramentans that will diagnose and treat 3,000 people this year. We are actively looking for ways to implement improvements in the areas of patient navigation, capacity to serve more patients including older patients currently excluded from the program, and development of specialty care services," commented David Ramirez from Sacramento ACT.

"Until we pass a comprehensive health coverage plan for all Californians regardless of immigration status, it is vital to continue supporting county safety net programs throughout the state. In Los Angeles, My Health LA has proven to be indispensable for many families that do not have the means to buy private insurance," said Sonya Vasquez, Chief Program Officer at Community Health Councils.

"The Primary Care Access Program (PCAP) provides uninsured patients with a primary care medical home at Community Health Partnership's association of health centers. PCAP enrollees will benefit from a coordinated system of care through our partnership with the Santa Clara Valley Health and Hospital System, including Specialty Care. Additionally, we are most proud of the fact that we are implementing a coverage program that includes a strong educational component that promotes a 'culture of coverage' in our families, resulting in active and engaged partners in their own health," said Dolores Alvarado, Chief Executive Officer of Community Health Partnership.

"The largest industries in Monterey County are agriculture and hospitality, two industries that rely heavily on low-wage, immigrant labor. Everyone in our region benefits from their hard work. Yet, undocumented immigrants are not allowed to participate in the Affordable Care Act. Undocumented immigrants now represent about half of the people in California who are without health insurance and without affordable health care," said Jack Herbig, a Communities Organized for Relational Power in Action (COPA) leader in Monterey County.

The report predicts that additional California counties will also launch similar efforts in the near future, especially under new financial structures under both state law and the new federal Medicaid waiver and its Global Payment Program, which has incentives to offer preventive care and other treatments prior to the need for emergency or episodic care. In turn, these actions at the county level also provide additional momentum at the state level for inclusive health policies.

Please join a teleconference today with policy experts, county leaders, advocates as well as patients who have benefitted from these programs to learn about the major changes to the various county safety net programs. Media will have the opportunity to ask questions.

**WHEN:** Friday, May 20, 2016

**TIME:** 11:00 am - 12:00 pm PT

**DIAL:** (800) 230-1085

## **PARTICIPANTS**

- Anthony Wright, Executive Director, Health Access California
- Contra Costa Supervisor John Gioia
- David Ramirez, Sacramento ACT
- Lorenzo, patient with My Health LA, St. Gabriel
- Carmen, patient at Gardner Family Health Network, San Jose

**A recording of the call will be available** at 1:00 pm today for one week; to access the recording: (800) 475-6701, access code: 394253

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