

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Brian Allison
AFSCME

Nancy "Nan" Brasmer
CA Alliance for
Retired Americans

Kathy Ko Chin
Asian & Pacific Islander
American Health Forum

Lori Easterling
CA Teachers Association

Stewart Ferry
National MS Society –
MS CA Action Network

Aaron Fox
Los Angeles LGBT Center

Roma Guy
CA Women's Agenda

Betsy Imholz
Consumers Union

Paul Knepprath
Planned Parenthood
Affiliates of CA

Henry "Hank" Lacayo
Congress of CA Seniors

Ted Lempert
Children Now

Christina Livingston
Alliance of Californians for
Community Empowerment

Joshua Pechthalt
CA Federation of Teachers

Art Pulaski
CA Labor Federation

Emily Rusch
CALPIRG

Thomas Saenz
Mexican American Legal
Defense and Education Fund

Cary Sanders
CA Pan-Ethnic Health Network

Reshma Shamasunder
CA Immigrant Policy Center

Joan Pirkle Smith
Americans for
Democratic Action

Horace Williams
CA Black Health Network

Sonya Young
CA Black Women's
Health Project

Jon Youngdahl
SEIU State Council

Anthony Wright
Executive Director

Organizations listed for
identification purposes

@HealthAccess
www.health-access.org

For immediate release:

May 24, 2016

Contact: Anthony Wright, executive director Health Access
awright@health-access.org, 916-870-4782 (cell)

AS MEDI-CAL CELEBRATES ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY, HEALTH ADVOCATES CALL FOR ADDED IMPROVEMENTS

- *With Over 14 Million Californians In Medi-Cal Coverage, Increasing Urgency to Improve Core Pillar of the Health System We All Rely On.*
- *Recent ACA Expansions Are Transforming Medi-Cal from Categorical Programs for Certain Low-Income Californians to a Broad-Based Safety-Net for All; Advocates Celebrate #Health4AllKids Expansion While Continuing to Seek Further Expansions Regardless of Immigration Status.*
- *Improvements Needed Include #CABudget Action Item to Limit Estate Recovery; Efforts At Increased Rates and Accountability on Medicaid Managed Care plans to Ensure Access, Including Adequate Provider Networks and Timely Access to Care; and Other Transformations To Improve Quality and Equity.*

Sacramento, CA – Today, the California Department of Health Care Services is celebrating the 50th anniversary of Medi-Cal with an event in the Sacramento Convention Center this afternoon. On day of celebration, Anthony Wright, executive director of Health Access California, the statewide health care consumer advocacy coalition, offers these comments about Medi-Cal's past and future:

"Medi-Cal's half-century mark this year should be an opportunity not just for celebration but for action. Medi-Cal, covering over 14 million Californians, is a central pillar of the health system on which we all rely, and needs further improvements to best serve over a third of our state," said Wright. "On this 50th anniversary year, California is continuing to expand coverage with the inclusion of undocumented children, and our state should take additional steps to cover all income-eligible Californians regardless of immigration status—not just for the benefit of these families, but for the health and economic well-being of the state as a whole. This steps help makes our health system stronger and our economy more vibrant."

"This new California Budget should take another step to improve Medi-Cal, by following the lead of 40 other states in limiting estate recovery to long term care, so Californians don't fear losing their family home when signing up for Medi-Cal managed care. A modest investment can remove a barrier for many in signing up for coverage, and take away a penalty for families doing the right thing is getting coverage and trying to save for their family," said Wright.

"These changes would complete Medi-Cal's transformation under the ACA, from a collection of categorical programs for specific long-term low-income populations to a broad-based safety-net for all Californians, such as those whose loss of income may be temporary."

"With this new constituency comes new expectations of Medi-Cal, and that's why it must lead in terms of the access to and quality of care it provides. We also need not just more investment in provider reimbursements but also more accountability on the managed care plans in Medi-Cal to actually provide the access to care that they promise and are paid for." said Wright. "The shift of delivery of care to these managed care plans has been the other big recent transformation of Medi-Cal beyond expanded eligibility, but the unfinished work is to put in place the regular oversight to drive improvements in access and quality. With a third of the state, Medi-Cal can help spur reforms and improved value-based care throughout the entire system. These improvements shouldn't take another 5 years, much less 50."

###