

PRESS RELEASE

Thursday, September 1, 2016

2015-16 LEGISLATIVE RECAP: LANDMARK VICTORIES ON HEALTH; GOVERNOR AND VOTERS HAVE FINAL SAY

- *Legislative Session Included Major Progress on Patient Protections, #Health4All, Smoking Prevention, and Medi-Cal Improvements.*
- *PATIENT PROTECTIONS: Decades-Long Fight to Stop Surprise Medical Bills Resolved with AB72 To Protect Patients Going to In-Network Hospitals from Out-of-Network Doctor Bills.*
- *Beyond AB72, Other Patient Protection Bills Against Unfair Health Costs Include Last Year's SB137 to Require Accurate Provider Directories, AB339 to Cap Prescription Drug Cost-Sharing, and This Year's SB908 to Provide Notice of Unjustified Premiums, SB1135 to Inform Patients of Their Right to Timely Appointments and Medical Interpretation, and SB923 to Prevent Mid-Year Cost-Sharing Increases. Governor Brown Has Through September to Sign or Veto AB72, SB908, and SB1135.*
- *ACCESS & PREVENTION: Special Session Revamped MCO Tax That Prevented Over \$1 Billion in Medi-Cal Cuts, and Passed the Strongest Tobacco Regulations in Generations, Including Raising Smoking Age and Regulating E-Cigarettes.*
- *On Goal of #Health4All, Budget Deals Expanded Medi-Cal Coverage to All Children Regardless of Immigration Status, and Additional #Health4All Legislation SB10 Sought Federal "1332 Waiver" to Open Up Covered California To All.*
- *Medi-Cal Waiver Yielded New Federal Resources and Reforms; Other #CABudget Restorations Included Limiting Estate Recovery to Allow Those on Medi-Cal Managed Care To Keep Family Home. Voters to Decide on Revenues to Restore Medi-Cal with Propositions 55 & 56.*
- *Biggest Disappointment was Failure of SB 1010, to Give Notice and Disclosure of Prescription Drug Costs.*

SACRAMENTO, CA—Here's a comment on the progress made on improving California's health and health system in the 2015-16 legislative year, by Anthony Wright, executive director of Health Access California, the statewide health care consumer advocacy coalition.

PATIENT PROTECTIONS PASSED: “Through the state legislature's actions, Californians have gained new patient protections that will tangibly help patients get the care they need, when and where they need it, and without unfair and unexpected health care costs. If the Governor signs the bills on his desk, no longer will patients unknowingly face unjustified premium hikes without a chance to shop around, or surprise out-of-network medical bills when going to an in-network hospital. The issues of inaccurate provider directors, surprise out-of-network bills, unjustified premium increases, and exploding

prescription drug co-pays have plagued patients for decades, and it's gratifying to see legislative action to protect consumers."

ON LOBBYING: "We are pleased that the California legislature was able to stand up to special interests at key moments, most notably to pass the strongest tobacco control package in generations, which raised the smoking age and started to regulate E-cigarettes. After allowing a solution on surprise medical bills to fail due to physician group lobbying on last year's last day of session, this year's last day of session featured a unanimous vote on a compromise that strengthened consumer protections while coming to a fair resolution on reimbursement issues. Our biggest disappointment was the failure to proceed with proposals on prescription drug pricing--but PHRMA should not rest easy, as every unjustified price spike and visit to the pharmacy will only build public attention and anger to force the needed policy changes."

HEALTH4ALL: "The California Legislature made historic progress in expanding access to coverage. Already over 133,000 undocumented children are covered through full Medi-Cal. Because of bipartisan-backed legislation, the state is about to submit a federal waiver so all Californians, regardless of immigration status, can buy a health plan through Covered California. Including more Californians makes our health system stronger for everyone."

MEDI-CAL AND THE VOTERS: "With over a third of all Californians now covered under Medi-Cal - about 14 million Californians - the Legislature appropriately took steps to shore up and improve this pillar of the health system on which many rely. A revamped MCO tax helped prevent \$1 billion in cuts to Medi-Cal, and a new federal Medicaid waiver brings in new federal resources and introduces positive reforms. Through the budget process, Medi-Cal limited estate recovery, so Californians are not fearful that signing up for Medi-Cal managed care would mean losing the family home. Voters can take the next step: the likelihood of additional needed restorations and investments in Medi-Cal may be dependent on the revenues raised by Propositions 55 and 56 this November.

Reference materials:

[2016 Patients' Rights Legislation fact sheet](#)

[Fact sheets and materials on all Health Access California sponsored legislation](#)

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About Health Access California

Health Access California is the statewide health care consumer advocacy coalition, advocating for the goal of quality, affordable health care for all Californians. We represent consumers in the legislature, at administrative and regulatory agencies, in the media, and at public forums. For more information, please visit www.health-access.org.

