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Date: Tuesday, April 28, 2015

Candace Anderson

District II Board of Supervisor
Contra Costa County
309 Diablo Road
Danville, CA 94526

Re: Contra Costa Cares: Support

Dear Supervisor Anderson,

On behalf of Health Access California, I am writing to urge support of the proposed Contra Costa Cares initiative, a new program that would expand health care to all uninsured residents regardless of their immigration status.

Health Access California is a statewide consumer health advocacy coalition. Our mission is to obtain quality, affordable and accessible health coverage for all Californians.

Since the passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) in 2010, our coalition has actively engaged in the implementation of health reform here in California. Because of the ACA, over four million Californians have gained access to health coverage and new essential benefits. While we in California should be proud of this drastic reduction of our uninsured population, we remain deeply concerned that current policy prohibits many undocumented Californians from accessing the new coverage options under the ACA.

Last fall 2014, Health Access California conducted a survey of California county health departments, which focused on eligibility and enrollment for county programs. One of our key findings was that the 2014 implementation of the Affordable Care Act, namely, the launch of Covered California and the Medi-Cal expansion, significantly reduced the number of Californians on county indigent care programs. Given this reduction, we recommended that counties needed to re-orient their programs to helping the remaining uninsured that is ineligible for Covered California or Medi-Cal.

According to a recent study from the UC Berkeley Labor Center, between 80,000 to 98,000 Contra Costa residents will remain uninsured this year. These figures will decline as more Contra Costa residents enroll into Covered California or Medi-Cal. However, an estimated 19,000 of the remaining insured will be ineligible for health coverage due to their immigration status.

As cited in our report, Contra Costa was one of three counties, along with Sacramento and Yolo that made tough cuts to eliminate care for undocumented residents in 2009 during the economic crisis. Now that we are past that crisis, Supervisors in those other counties are also looking to revisit that decision, especially with the new opportunities and possibilities under the ACA. Given our survey of the state, we believe Contra Costa

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could be joined by at least one and possibly several other counties in extending health care to all their indigent residents this year.

We appreciate the work by the Access to Care Stakeholder Group, and the public and private health providers who participated, in coming up with the Contra Costa Cares proposal. Having worked and analyzed indigent care programs and proposals in other counties, from Los Angeles to Alameda, we understand the fiscal and program issues and constraints. The Contra Costa Cares proposal is an important step forward that we support, we also urge the Board to take another look at both enrollment estimates and financing and see if there is any way for the program to include specialty care as well—and if not this year, then to include it in future years.

A recent UCLA Center for Health Policy Research report states that undocumented Californians comprise 9% of our state's workforce. They are our farmer workers, small business owners, day laborers, among many other blue and white-collar workers. Undocumented Contra Costa residents are an integral part of our labor force and community—they need to be included in our health system as well. It does not reflect our values, improve public health, advance economic security, or embody common good to deny health access to thousands of undocumented Contra Costa residents.

We urge you to support and prioritize the Contra Costa Cares program in this year's budget.

Thank you for your considerations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials 'RA' enclosed within a circular scribble.

Rose Auguste
Northern California Regional Organizer

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Anthony Wright' in a cursive style.

Anthony Wright
Executive Director