PRESS RELEASE

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COVERED CALIFORNIA REPORT GIVES GREEN LIGHT TO WAIVER TO ALLOW ACCESS TO UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

- #Health4All Advocates Encouraged by Momentum for an Affordable Care Act
- #Health4All “1332 Waiver”
- Consumer and Immigrant Groups have Fought to Remove Exclusion and Allow Undocumented Californians to Buy Unsubsidized Coverage Through Covered California
- Waiver Requires State Authorizing Legislation, Currently Pending in SB10 (Lara)
- Waiver Would Allow Hundreds of Thousands of Mixed-Status Working Families to Enroll Together

SACRAMENTO, CA--Today, the Covered California staff gave a green light to pursuing a federal waiver that will allow all Californians, regardless of immigration status, to be able to buy coverage with their own money through Covered California. Currently, undocumented immigrants are barred from using the state marketplace under the ACA even when using their own money and instead must go directly to a broker or health plan to purchase health insurance.

The staff recommendation was to consider focused, limited waiver this year, and begin to consider more sweeping changes for future years. The proposal to allow immigrants to enroll in Covered California was identified as a focused proposal that did not violate any of the proposed federal guardrails. Enabling legislation will need to be passed by the Legislature and signed by Governor Brown to submit the 1332 waiver to the federal government. Health Access California and other consumer and immigrant groups have been advocating for allowing undocumented immigrants to buy unsubsidized health plans through Covered California through a 1332 waiver as well as through SB 10 (Lara).

“All Californians, regardless of immigration status, should be allowed to buy quality, affordable health coverage through Covered California. Moving forward with this waiver is not just an important symbolic step toward inclusion but will also provide practical benefit and additional access for thousands of Californians,” said Anthony Wright, executive director of Health Access California, the statewide health care consumer advocacy coalition.
“Allowing undocumented immigrants to buy health insurance through Covered California removes a counterproductive exclusion in the federal law. This exclusion discourages a crucial part of our economy and society from taking responsibility for their health and finances by purchasing coverage and sends an unfortunate signal to many more,” said Wright. “Soon, many California families with mixed immigration status will be able to buy coverage together easily, even if some family members are eligible for subsidies and others are not.”

“We look forward to working with Covered California to ensure all Californians are covered. This change will allow undocumented Californians to purchase coverage using their own money, which will benefit not just these families but the health system as a whole. It strengthens the health system on which we all rely when health care coverage is accessible for all Californians, regardless of immigration status,” said Wright.

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