

March 31, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Health4All Elders: Full-Scope Medi-Cal for Low-Income Undocumented Elders (Ages 65+)

Dear Governor Newsom,

We, the undersigned organizations, write to respectfully request that your administration work with the legislature to expedite implementation of the Health4All Elders proposal, in light of the present COVID-19 public health emergency. This proposal, included in the Governor's proposed 2020-2021 budget, would provide full-scope Medi-Cal to some 27,000 low-income undocumented seniors ages 65 and older by removing immigration status as an eligibility exclusion.

We commend the Administration's leadership in responding swiftly and responsibly to both prevent the continued spread of the coronavirus as well as prepare our state for the health care and economic impacts that are to come. The California Department of Public Health's COVID-19 resource page confirms that "some people are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. This includes older adults (65+)"¹. Our low-income elders are especially vulnerable. Seniors are more medically fragile and face barriers that make it harder for them to access care during times of social distancing, and undocumented seniors are even more at risk because they are excluded from many vital services altogether. There is no justification for leaving them out of comprehensive health care in the midst of this crisis. Besides humanitarian concerns, doing so will severely undermine efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19 throughout the nation.

Recent federal stimulus bills passed by Congress create an optional state Medicaid program that provides COVID-19 testing (and testing only) that will be funded with 100 percent federal Medicaid funds. However, this will be available only to uninsured people who meet immigrant eligibility requirements for federal Medicaid. This means it will exclude huge swaths of our immigrant communities, including the undocumented.

The COVID-19 pandemic makes starkly clear what we have expressed throughout the campaign for Health4All: that the health of each one of us is deeply interconnected with that of every Californian. We must recognize our shared humanity and care for each other, our neighbors, and those most vulnerable to falling through the gaps of our social safety net. Public programs should not exclude any group of people from primary and preventive care, especially when responding to a public health emergency. It is high time that our state moves toward parity in our Medi-Cal program for all who call California home.

Undocumented Californians are deeply rooted in our state and provide significant economic, familial, and cultural contributions to our communities. Almost two-thirds of undocumented Californians have lived in the U.S. for more than ten years,² and one in six of all California children have at least one undocumented parent.³ Undocumented Californians also play a significant role in the workplace across industries with

¹ <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cid/dcdc/pages/immunization/ncov2019.aspx>

² Pew Research Center. (2017). 5 Facts About Illegal Immigration in the U.S. Retrieved from: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/27/5-facts-about-illegal-immigration-in-the-u-s/>

³ Pastor, M. & Marcelli, E. (2013). USC Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration. Undocumented Californians, Immigration Reform and Our Future Together. Retrieved from: https://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/731/docs/whats_at_stake_for_the_state.pdf

one in ten workers in California being undocumented.⁴ Undocumented immigrants contribute about \$180 billion a year to our state's economy, and bring out innovation and cultural diversity through entrepreneurship.⁵ Despite their vital place in California's social and economic fabric, undocumented and uninsured Californians live sicker, die younger, and are one emergency away from financial ruin because they are locked out of comprehensive health care.

Moments of crisis call for swift response. We should accelerate expansion of health coverage for all seniors, who are a high risk group that need timely care. Our health care system is stronger when everyone is covered. Making Medi-Cal inclusive of all Californians builds on our state's leadership in advancing universal coverage, a goal toward which the Newsom Administration has already taken significant strides.

For these reasons, we urge you and the legislature to act immediately to expedite the investment to remove the immigration status eligibility exclusion to full-scope Medi-Cal for undocumented Californians ages 65 and older.

If you have any questions, please contact Orville Thomas at the California Immigrant Policy Center at othomas@caimmigrant.org or Ronald Coleman at Health Access California at rcoleman@health-access.org.

Cc: The Honorable Holly Mitchell, Chair, Senate Budget Committee
The Honorable Phil Ting, Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
The Honorable Toni Atkins, President pro Tempore of the Senate
The Honorable Anthony Rendon, Speaker of the Assembly

Sincerely,

ACLU California
ACCE
Alliance for a Better Community
AltaMed
ALPA Health
Asian Americans Advancing Justice California
Buen Vecino
California Health Professional Student Alliance (CaHPSA)
California Health+ Advocates
California Immigrant Policy Center (CIPC)
California Immigrant Youth Justice Alliance (CIYJA)
California Labor Federation
California Latinas for Reproductive Justice
California Partnership
California Physicians Alliance (CaPa)

California Teamsters Public Affairs Council
Campaign Against Racism LA
Campaign for Immigrant Detention Reform
Central Valley Immigrant Integration
Collaborative (CVIIC)
Centro Legal de la Raza
Coachella Valley Immigrant Dignity Coalition-
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
Community Clinic Association of LA County
Community Health Councils
Community Health Initiative of Orange County
Community Health Partnership
Contra Costa Immigrant Rights Alliance
Courageous Resistance
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network (CPEHN)

⁴ American Immigration Council. (2017). Immigrants in California. Retrieved from <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-in-california>

⁵ California Immigrant Policy Center. (2017). Resilience in an Age of Inequality: Immigrant Contributions to California. Retrieved from: <https://www.scribd.com/document/337336889/Resilience-In-An-Age-of-Inequality-Immigrant-Contributions-Report-2017-edition>

California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation
(CRLAF)
Drug Policy Alliance
Education and Leadership Foundation
Farmworker Justice
Fresno Barrios Unidos
Friends Committee and Legislation of
California
Greenlining Institute
Health Access
Healthy Richmond
Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice (IC4IJ)
Inland Empire Immigrant Youth Collective
Indivisible CA Statestrong
Justice in Aging
Korean Community Center of East Bay
Long Beach Immigrant Rights Coalition
(LBIRC)
Latino Coalition for a Healthy California
(LCHC)
Latino Community Foundation
Maternal and Child Health Access
Mi Familia Vota
Mixteco/Indigena Organizing Project
Monument Impact
Multi-faith ACTION Coalition
National Health Law Program
National Immigration Law Center
NCJW California Policy Advocacy Network
NextGen
#OCC Coalition
Pacifica Social Justice
PICO California
Pre-Health Dreamers
Prevention Institute
Proteus for Education, Employment and
Community Services
RAC-CA
San Francisco AIDS Foundation
SAN South Asian Network
SEIU California
Services, Immigrant Rights and Education
Network (SIREN)
Senior and Disability Action
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
(SEARAC)
The Children's Partnership
Training Occupational Development Educating
Communities (TODEC)
Undocuhealthleaders
Unite HERE-

United Ways of California
Vision y Compromiso
Voice for Progress
Western on Center Law and Poverty
Young Invincibles



Central Valley Immigrant Integration Collaborative



California Pan-Ethnic Health Network



#OneContraCosta

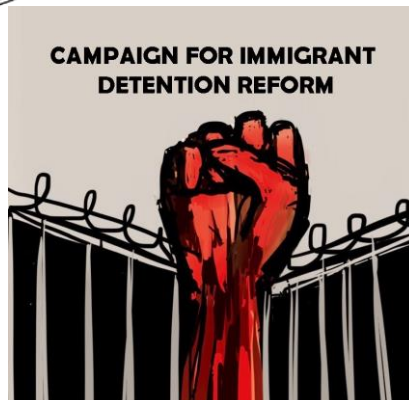




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PREVENTION
INSTITUTE



Visión y Compromiso™



COMMUNITY HEALTH INITIATIVE
OF ORANGE COUNTY



Inland Coalition for
Immigrant Justice



Voices for Progress

YOUNG 
INVINCIBLES



United Ways of California



California
LABOR
Federation



JUSTICE IN AGING

FIGHTING SENIOR POVERTY THROUGH LAW



CONTRA COSTA
IMMIGRANT RIGHTS ALLIANCE



Together, building a stronger community

UNITE
HERE!



COMMUNITY HEALTH
PARTNERSHIP
— Supporting our health centers —