

September 17, 2007

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
State of California
Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

I am joining with Californians who value the health of our children and families to ask you to continue to work toward health care coverage of ALL children, families and individuals in our state.

Children's health coverage is an important first step. ***We ask for your leadership to ensure that health reform passed in 2007 guarantees funding for children's coverage starting in 2008.*** Tens of thousands of children covered by county-based Children's Health Initiatives (CHI) are at risk of losing their coverage in 2008 and 2009. It would be tantamount to rolling the clock back five years if the state fails to sustain healthcare coverage for children current enrolled in the local CHI programs and doesn't continue the progress made in program expansion and simplification. Under current health reform efforts, we must provide sustainable funding beginning in 2008 for expansion of children's programs, ensure that we preserve benefits and protections for all who are eligible for Medi-Cal and Healthy Families under those existing programs, and minimize the barriers to enrollment and retention for children and adults alike.

Last year, you made the first step to covering all children by approving \$20 million for community-based Outreach, Enrollment, Retention and Utilization (OERU) activities, and you lent your support to simplification efforts such as those outlined in SB 437. *Your line item veto in August eliminated these advances.*

Grass roots and community-based organizations make up the state's OERU efforts. These organizations work to prevent families from falling through the cracks by facilitating the enrollment and retention of eligible but uninsured children and families, and making insurance cards work for people who do carry them. *Enrollment and retention assistance in healthcare coverage has been proven effective in improving the health status and reducing the financial liability of an uninsured population in both the public and private health care systems.* Your veto means that this year alone in Los Angeles County, 25,000 low-income children and their family members who are eligible for health coverage will not be provided with application assistance. I believe that OERU assistance is critical to the success of meaningful health coverage. Without assistance to low-income families to successfully enroll, maintain and use their health care coverage, the impact of any health care expansion efforts will be seriously weakened.

I ask for your leadership to:

- Expand health coverage for children, their parents and ALL Californians.
- Reinstate Outreach, Enrollment, Retention and Utilization Funding as an integral part of coverage.
- Promote system simplifications, such as CHDP Gateway improvements, SB 24 Prenatal and Newborn Hospital Gateways, and SB 437, that will help to accurately and quickly enroll hundreds of thousands of children and pregnant women.
- Help protect tens of thousands of children from losing their coverage by ensuring adequate S-CHIP reauthorization funding, and ensuring relief from problematic citizenship documentation requirements.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

cc: Speaker of the Assembly Fabian Nunez
Senate Pro Tem Don Perata