

YOUR LETTERHEAD – please copy Lynn Kersey, MCH Access at lynnk@mchaccess.org

Date

Dear Supervisor _____:

The _____ (program, agency) writes in strong support of the Children’s Health Outreach Initiative (CHOI) and the agencies funded by this program.

As _____ (describe agency and role with CHOI – how refer or receive training or get support), we

Although public insurance programs are available, the reality is that people need more than education and assistance with the application process. In fact, the vast majority of work CHOI contractors do is to navigate adults, as well as children, between programs, help them when their Medi-Cal or other insurance is cut off or for some other reason doesn’t work, help them keep the doctor or clinic they want so that they will continue to go to appointments, and provide them referrals that work for other services, such as food, housing and transportation. From 2003-2017 contractors addressed over 441,547 such issues.

Access to healthcare and mental health services helps determine health and quality of life for our residents, thus, we are grateful to have this resource in our region. In addition, CHOI agencies not only work with accessing health care benefits, they refer to a myriad of other support that helps keep people healthy. Some agencies enroll in CalFresh or refer to a community agency, or refer to food banks, as well as assist with subsidized housing referrals, transportation benefits and resources, domestic violence assistance, Earned Income Tax Credit, childcare, and more.

In Los Angeles County alone, nearly 1.3 million people gained insurance after the passage of the Affordable Care Act. This number is higher than any other county in the US and even higher than most states in the country. Such a robust enrollment was in no small part due to the agencies that worked diligently, not only to help patients enroll in insurance, but also to help them maintain their coverage year after year. CHOI funded agencies do work that is critical to maintaining access to care, particularly for vulnerable and sick patients.

The CHOI contractors work with the most vulnerable of residents, who are fearful of enrolling and accessing healthcare services. The trust developed with CHOI agencies helps homeless, undocumented and other vulnerable residents overcome fears. With the recent threats of changes to the public charge rules, the court strike down of the ACA, the work that CHOI agencies are doing is of utmost importance. On the positive side, CHOI work is needed to explain expansions of benefits that may occur in California for 18-25 year-old undocumented, at least, and potential premium subsidies to Covered California enrollees.

Given the extreme need and demand for these services in our communities, that no other group of county or private employees fully undertake, we urge our County Government leaders to act and provide resources for the CHOI agencies to ensure that these resources remain available and responsive to this community need.

Sincerely,

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