

Having Our Say!

Communities of Color's Stake in Health Care Reform

Press Release – For Immediate Release

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Governor's Budget Cuts Target Most Vulnerable Populations

Programs for children, the low-income, disabled, immigrants and seniors face deep cuts

Oakland, CA - Advocates were dismayed by deep cuts to health and human services programs in the Governor's revised budget plan released Wednesday, May 14th. The budget revisions include deep cuts to the Healthy Families and Medi-Cal programs, which provide critical health care services to children, the disabled, and working poor families. "Last year the Governor pushed a plan to overhaul the health system, and now he's calling for cuts that will decimate the health of people up and down the state. It is shameful and disheartening how quickly he is willing to do an about-face and cut health care for disadvantaged communities," stated Ellen Wu, Executive Director of the California Pan-Ethnic Network.

In January, the Governor proposed several changes to current health care programs in an attempt to capture budget "savings," including raising premiums and co-payments in the Healthy Families program, reducing or eliminating benefits, and re-instating burdensome eligibility requirements. The May Revision goes even farther. The Governor's new plan to bridge the ever-increasing budget deficit includes taking coverage away from working poor families and lawful immigrants.

"The Governor's budget unfairly targets Californians that are least likely to speak up for themselves and really need help," stated Sarah Olivia Mercer, project director for Having Our Say. "Rather than uniting our state, showing some leadership, and proposing solutions that will truly balance the budget, the Governor has chosen to bully our most vulnerable. He should really pick on those with the same size wallets, not families that are struggling to survive."

The cuts from January include:

- Reinstating burdensome eligibility requirements through Medi-Cal called quarterly status reports;
- Increasing Healthy Families premiums and share of costs;
- Eliminating and limiting services and benefits in the Medi-Cal and Healthy Families programs (such as dental care for adults, eye glasses and others); and
- Reducing payments to most Medi-Cal providers by 10%.

Additional Cuts in the May Revision to the Medi-Cal and Healthy Families Programs:

- A month to month eligibility requirement for emergency Medi-Cal services.

- Limits to health benefits for lawful immigrants to emergency services, pregnancy related services, long-term care, and breast and cervical cancer services.
- Eliminates coverage for low income working parents between 100% and 61% of the federal poverty level.
- Delays efforts to make children's health programs more efficient.

Over the next few months advocates will utilize various advocacy efforts focused on state legislators to encourage them not to approve these cuts and to identify revenue solutions for a balanced approach towards closing the budget deficit.

For more information about the Having Our Say coalition, please go to:
www.cpehn.org/havingoursay.php