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California Needs a Diverse Health Benefit Exchange Board

OAKLAND – Governor Schwarzenegger’s recent appointments to California’s Health Benefit Exchange Board of Susan Kennedy, his Chief of Staff, and Kim Belshé, the outgoing Secretary for California’s Health and Human Services Agency, highlight the need for Board appointments that reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of California as mandated by California’s landmark Health Benefit Exchange legislation.

“CPEHN was instrumental in advocating for language that calls for diverse representation on the Health Benefit Exchange Board,” says Ellen Wu, Executive Director of the California Pan-Ethnic Health Network (CPEHN). “This is critical as studies show that 65% of Californians who will benefit from subsidies in the Health Benefit Exchange will be people of color and 32% will speak English less than well. It will be important to appoint Board members who have a background and proven track record working to ensure culturally and linguistically appropriate access to health services for communities of color,” adds Wu.

California’s Exchange law calls for the establishment of a Board consisting of 5 members: The Secretary of Health and Human Services, two appointees made by the Governor, and one each by the Speaker and Pro Tem.

“Governor Schwarznegger has made his move,” states Darcell Harris, Executive Director of the California Black Health Network. “We are now counting on President pro tem Steinberg and Speaker Pérez to ensure that the remaining Board appointees can meet the needs of communities of color and are truly representative of our state.”

CPEHN was founded in 1992 with a vision for a quality, affordable, and culturally competent health care system. For more information, please go to www.cpehn.org.

For more information:

[Equity Through Implementation: Ensuring health reform meets the needs of California’s diverse communities](#), CPEHN’s factsheet, examines how the Health Benefit Exchange will be comprised primarily of communities of color. In 2014, when the new Health Benefit Exchange becomes fully operational, 2.3 million Californians will be eligible for subsidies to purchase health insurance in the Exchange. Of these, 65% will be people of color and 32% of the adults will speak English less than well.