

















WESTERN CENTER







CWDA















children's

institute









BLACK













for Children's Health

our family

coalition



















PathPoint





CAPA

California Association of Public Authorities

for In-Home Supportive Services









CALIFORNIA HEALTH ADVOCATES

Medicare: Policy, Advocacy and Educati













































FIRST





California School **Employees Association**























Disability





Gender

Alchemy







GBTQ















Building Understanding Between Cultures



























a california healtht center











CALIFORNIA



















































LOS ANGELES

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ARDNER















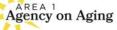






















BLACK WOMEN FOR WELLNESS

ACTION PROJECT











hamily Caregiving

























































March 6, 2025

The Honorable Brett Guthrie Chair Committee on Energy and Commerce U.S. House of Representatives Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr. Ranking Member Committee on Energy and Commerce U.S. House of Representatives Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mike Crapo Chair Committee on Finance U.S. Senate Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Ron Wyden Ranking Member Committee on Finance U.S. Senate Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: The 119th Congress Must Not Risk Lives for Tax Cuts

Dear Chair Crapo, Ranking Member Wyden, Chair Guthrie, Ranking Member Pallone:

We, the undersigned organizations, comprise a diverse coalition of community-based, faith-based, labor, county, and health care organizations across California. Medicaid, is a lifeline for coverage and a foundational source of economic and health security for nearly 80 million women, children, veterans, seniors, and people with disabilities in the United States. Medicaid, Medi-Cal in California, is a key funding pillar for the doctors, clinics, and hospitals on which we all rely. We write to you out of deep concern and disappointment that recently passed Reconciliation Resolutions - Senate Concurrent Resolution 7 and House Concurrent Resolution 14 - set your committees on an untenable path of destruction to federally funded coverage programs, including extreme cuts to Medicaid. We strongly oppose any committee actions that will negatively impact Medi-Cal.

¹ Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services, October 2024 Medicaid and CHIP Enrollment Highlights, January 15, 2025: https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/program-information/medicaid-and-chip-enrollment-data/report-highlights/index.html

Despite widespread bipartisan support for Medicaid,^{2,3} including polling that indicates 77% of people in the United States have a favorable opinion of Medicaid,⁴ your committees are being pressured to make cuts that will gut and dismantle this crucial program, reducing life-saving health care coverage and access for millions of Californians and leading to unnecessary suffering, illness, and death. At a time when low-income people are struggling to pay for their groceries and rent, we cannot raise their health care costs to pay for tax cuts for the most wealthy.

Medi-Cal

Nearly 15 million Californians depend on Medi-Cal, which provides free health care, dental care, vision care, mental health care, substance use disorder services, and long-term care to low-income families, seniors, and people with disabilities across the state. Expanded coverage for Californians as a result of the ACA significantly reduced California's uninsured population by providing increased access to primary and preventive care, making families healthier, and protecting public health for all Californians.

Regrettably, last week, Congress set in motion committee action that could lead to devastating cuts to Medicaid under the guise of weeding out waste, fraud, and abuse. Cuts to Medicaid will have a catastrophic impact on the ability of families and workers - including those in California - to access comprehensive, affordable health care. The proposals will devastate Medi-Cal and its enrollees, eliminating and/or degrading health care for the 1 in 3 Californians enrolled in Medi-Cal, including 1 in 4 seniors and people with disabilities, 1 in 2 children, and 1 in 2 Latinos who rely on this program in California today. A portion of the over 823,000 seniors and people with disabilities who rely on Medi-Cal home care benefits (In-Home Supportive Service)⁶ for help staying healthy at home may instead be forced into costly institutions. With 1 in 5 of all California workers already enrolled in Medi-Cal (19%), and as high as 1 in 3 workers in the Agriculture (36%) and restaurant industries (35%), working families will be impacted across the state.⁷ Children and families will get sicker, emergency visits will increase, more people will die or end up with significant medical debt.

Why No Cut is the Right Cut

People across the United States are calling on Congress to improve Medicaid - over 60% of respondents to a recent national poll stated they do not believe there is enough spending on the program.⁸ In California, across party lines, the sentiment is similar, with only 13% of Californians

² KFF, "The debate over Federal Medicaid Cuts: Perspectives of Medicaid Enrollees who voted for President Trump and Vice President Harris", February 25, 2025:

 $[\]underline{\text{https://www.kff.org/medicaid/report/the-debate-over-federal-medicaid-cuts-perspectives-of-medicaid-enrollees-who-voted-for-preside} \\ \underline{\text{nt-trump-and-vice-president-harris/}}$

³ NORC at the University of Chicago, Poll Explores Californians' Attitudes on Medi-Cal, Covered California, and Federal Cuts to Both, March 3, 2025:

https://www.chcf.org/publication/poll-californian-attitudes-medi-cal-covered-ca-federal-cuts/#executive-summary

⁴ KFF, "5 Charts About Public Opinion on Medicaid", January 17, 2025:

https://www.kff.org/medicaid/poll-finding/5-charts-about-public-opinion-on-medicaid/

⁵ California Health Care Foundation, "How Many in Your Congressional District Ged Medi-Cal or a Premium Subsidy through Covered CA?", January 22,2025:

https://www.chcf.org/publication/how-many-congressional-district-get-medi-cal-premium-subsidy-through-covered-california/#related -links-and-downloads

⁶ CA Department of Social Services In-Home Supportive Services December 2024 Program Data: https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/ihss/program-data

⁷ California Health Care Foundation, "Do Medi-Cal enrollees work?", January 24, 2025: https://www.chcf.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/DoMediCalEnrolleesWorkPolicyGlance2025.pdf

⁸ KFF, "The Debate Over Federal Medicaid Cuts: Perspectives of Medicaid Enrollees Who Voted for President Trump and Vice President Harris," February 25, 2025:

surveyed favoring cuts to federal funding. When surveyed, two-thirds of the general public (69%) say Medicaid is working well for those covered by the program. ¹⁰ Most importantly, 82% of respondents stated they disapproved of large cuts in funding for health care programs in order to offset the cost of large new tax cuts. 11 Less than 20% of survey respondents believed Medicaid was a welfare program encouraging dependency and full of waste, fraud, and abuse. 12 Despite the support of the overwhelming majority of people in the United States for Medicaid, your committee is now considering programmatic changes that will undermine the public and disrupt care for millions. In the paragraphs below we explain why leading proposals for how to cut the program will only create greater harm and increase cost burdens over time:

Work Requirements

Work requirements do not work. With states bearing the burden of implementation, perceived savings quickly lead to deep costs. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, most enrollees are already working, or will qualify for a likely exemption. Among adults under age 65 with Medicaid who do not receive benefits from the Social Security Disability Programs, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), and who are not also covered by Medicare, 92% were working full or part-time (64%), or not working due to caregiving responsibilities, illness or disability, or school attendance (28%).14 Taking a closer look at families, data indicates that three-quarters of Medicaid enrollees under 65 live in a household where at least one family member works full or part time. 15 Equally important, public opinion provides no mandate for such draconian changes. Over 60% of survey respondents are concerned that many people who are in poor health - including persons with chronic health conditions or serious illness, who have a disability, or who take care of their children or parents could lose their health care under mandatory work requirements. A testament to all people. concerns about taking away health care overrides concerns about potential abuse. 16 The general public and consumers are not alone in being concerned - leading physician organizations, including American Medical Association, the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics all oppose Medicaid work requirements. For many adults that are working two or three jobs just to keep a roof over their heads, who do not have access to high speed internet, or for whom English is a second language, complex forms and frequent reporting requirements will lead to them or their households being kicked off Medicaid even if they still qualify. To those suggesting that work requirements restore the dignity of work, we strongly disagree.

https://www.kff.org/medicaid/report/the-debate-over-federal-medicaid-cuts-perspectives-of-medicaid-enrollees-who-voted-for-preside nt-trump-and-vice-president-harris/

⁹ NORC at the University of Chicago, Poll Explores Californians' Attitudes on Medi-Cal, Covered California, and Federal Cuts to Both, March 3, 2025:

https://www.chcf.org/publication/poll-californian-attitudes-medi-cal-covered-ca-federal-cuts/#executive-summary

¹⁰ KFF, "5 Charts About Public Opinion on Medicaid", January 17, 2025:

https://www.kff.org/medicaid/poll-finding/5-charts-about-public-opinion-on-medicaid/

11 Hart Research for Protect Our Care, "Key Issues in Health Care: Where Voters Stand", February 11, 2025. https://www.protectourcare.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/POC-Hart-Poll-Press-Briefing.pdf

¹³ KFF, "Understanding the Intersection of Medicaid and Work: An Update", February 4, 2025.

https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/understanding-the-intersection-of-medicaid-and-work-an-update/ ¹⁴ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, "Medicaid Work Requirements Could Put 36 Million People at Risk of Losing Health Coverage".

https://www.cbpp.org/research/health/medicaid-work-requirements-could-put-36-million-people-at-risk-of-losing-health?link_id=23&c an id=e0bc2dfcd7917deb74179a46bf9ef537&source=email-re-the-greatest-transfer-of-wealth-in-more-than-a-century&email referr er=email 2621244&email subject=re-the-greatest-transfer-of-wealth-in-more-than-a-century

¹⁵ KFF, "State Indicators: Distribution of People Ages 0-64 with Medicaid by Family Work Status (2023) Distribution of People Ages 0-64 with Medicaid by Family Work Status | KFF

¹⁶ Hart Research for Protect Our Care, "Key Issues in Health Care: Where Voters Stand", February 11, 2025. https://www.protectourcare.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/POC-Hart-Poll-Press-Briefing.pdf

Enhanced Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) Changes

Any change to FMAP is a cut. We are deeply concerned by increasing dialogue that suggests an openness to ending or changing the enhanced 90% rate that allowed states to expand Medicaid access. Regardless if a state has relied on it for just a few years or for over a decade, this enhanced rate is critical to state budgeting, and could result in massive gaps in state budgets if not continued. Additionally, we are opposed to any FMAP reductions that target states that choose to use state-only funds to provide coverage to certain communities or for certain services that federal funding can not be utilized for. With this nation's founding document clearly delineating federal versus state rights, states should not be harmed for exercising their state's rights in the Medicaid program. Lastly, the long established Medicaid matching rate floor must be continued. Without this funding, states will suddenly find their budgets destabilized, risking other critical programs. We are opposed to any changes to FMAP, including changes to enhanced FMAP rates.

Per Capita Caps

Currently, states receive federal Medicaid matching funds based on the costs of providing services to enrollees. Under Medicaid today, for every dollar a state spends on a Medicaid enrollee or service that is federally allowable, the state receives federal support. States are guaranteed continued federal support for actual spending. With a per capita cap, the federal government makes a limited payment to the state based on a preset formula, which does not increase based on actual costs. States exceeding the "cap" for enrollees would thus need to find other revenues to maintain spending levels at the expense of other state programs and services. Even if the established preset per capita cap was to grow at medical inflation, caps will only hamper care and innovation. We are opposed to per capita caps as the mechanism to determine federal Medicaid matching funds.

Rolling Back Three Key CMS Rules

Under prior administrations, important rules were brought forward, reviewed by stakeholders, and finalized to improve quality of care and limit costly administrative burdens. **We are opposed to any rollbacks of prior rules including:**

- Increased Coverage Redetermination Rules (CMS-2421-F & F2): Repealing the final rules "Streamlining Medicaid: Medicare Shared Savings Program Eligibility Determination and Enrollment" and "Streamlining Medicaid, Children's Health Insurance Program, and Basic Health Program Application, Eligibility Determination, Enrollment, and Renewal Processes" will create additional administrative burdens on states at the same time that Congress is looking to streamline and simplify processes. The protocols in place today to govern how states verify Medicaid and CHIP eligibility strike the right balance guaranteeing states are responsibly redetermining eligibility while minimizing the time and documents needed by individuals and families to appropriately show they meet program requirements. These policies still allow for state choice while recognizing best practices that have been learned over decades of experience.
- <u>Medicaid Access Rule (CMS-2442-F):</u> Repealing the final rule "Ensuring Access to Medicaid Services" will remove new requirements that include improving access to home and community-based services (HCBS), health and safety protections, new quality measurement reporting, and more consistency of regulations across Medicaid delivery

systems. According to the AARP, people in the United States prefer to age in place and people with disabilities want to remain in their communities. The "Ensuring Access to Medicaid Services" final rule is key to ensuring this, especially as our population is rapidly aging and will require more assistance with activities of daily living.¹⁷

• Nursing Home Minimum Staffing Rule (CMS 3442-F): Repealing the final rule "Minimum Staffing Standards for Long-Term Care Facilities and Medicaid Institutional Payment Transparency Reporting" removes critical minimum staffing standards on long-term care facilities that are essential to improving quality of care and outcomes for vulnerable residents that require assistance 24 hours/day. The final rule allows years for facility operators to come into compliance, a later implementation date for rural facilities, and includes hardship exemptions for facilities to take into account unique workforce challenges. Ultimately, this rule saves lives.

Eligibility for Immigrant Communities

Immigrants helped build the United States, and still proudly power our nation, harvest our food, care for our elders, and provide many more vital services to our country. Immigrant communities are rightfully eligible for Medicaid. However, federal law already severely restricts Medicaid eligibility for immigrants. While many states, including California, have chosen to expand Medicaid coverage to broader immigrant populations, including undocumented immigrants, they are doing so with state only funds. Congress would be gutting care for an already devastatingly narrow subset of immigrants in the U.S., such as lawful permanent residents (LPRs) and those in need of emergency Medicaid. Reducing eligibility for immigrant communities will cost us greatly - harming not only individual families, but also creating greater health inequities across communities, and undermining our economy. Without basic health care provided by Medicaid, school-aged immigrant youth will miss more days of school, resulting in educational setbacks and potential public health harms. Polls indicate that people across the country know better -65% of persons surveyed indicate disapproval for any new restrictions that could reduce the number of people eligible for Medicaid. 19 In California, that sentiment is even higher - with three in four (75%) surveyed Californians stating that everyone should have access to coverage.²⁰ Despite this, some in Congress see misguided savings in removing eligibility for some non-citizen categories. We are opposed to any limitation of Medicaid eligibility based on citizenship status.

Provider Taxes

States are able to increase the amount of federal Medicaid funding they receive by leveraging taxes on health care providers that are then reinvested to draw down federal funding. These funds are then reinvested by the state - often in close collaboration with stakeholders - to strengthen a state's Medicaid program. These investments include, but are not limited to, expanding services and increasing provider reimbursement rates. Leveraging these taxes to

¹⁷ AARP 2024 Home & Community Preferences Among Adults 18 and Over, December 2024. https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/topics/livable-communities/housing/2024-home-community-preferences-report.doi. 10.26419-2fres.00831.001.pdf

¹⁸ Letter from Rachel M. Werner, MD, PhD and Norma B. Coe, PhD, University of Pennsylvania Leonard Davis Institute of Health Economics, to Senator Elizabeth Warren, July 8, 2024 https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/letter_from_researchers_to_sen_warren_070824.pdf

¹⁹ Hart Research for Protect Our Care, "Key Issues in Health Care: Where Voters Stand", February 11, 2025. https://www.protectourcare.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/POC-Hart-Poll-Press-Briefing.pdf

²⁰ NORC at the University of Chicago, Poll Explores Californians' Attitudes on Medi-Cal, Covered California, and Federal Cuts to Both, March 3, 2025:

https://www.chcf.org/publication/poll-californian-attitudes-medi-cal-covered-ca-federal-cuts/#executive-summary

benefit providers allows states to increase timely access to care as more providers choose to serve Medicaid enrollees. California, like many states, has a long history with provider taxes. For twenty years, California has used a mix of three-provider related taxes: a fee on certain general acute-care hospitals (Hospital Quality Assurance Fee or HQAF), a fee on free-standing skilled nursing facilities (AB 1629 Quality Assurance Fee), and a tax on enrollment in health care service plans in the state of California (Managed Care Organization or MCO Tax).²¹ We are opposed to changes that can limit states' ability to use provider taxes at their current levels.

Impacts of Medicaid Cuts on the Economy and Jobs

Committee actions risk undermining the economic stability of communities in every congressional district. In California, Medi-Cal spending is in the billions of dollars in every district. With approximately \$2 billion to \$6 billion per district in Medi-Cal spending, cities and counties will be hard pressed to find new economic drivers like this.²² Cuts will risk hurting state credit ratings and could even drive local jurisdictions to the fiscal brink. Californians - already struggling with maternity ward and hospital closures - will experience more closure of financially vulnerable health care providers, longer wait times, more health care-related travel, and poorer health. As health care facilities, including rural hospitals, close or downsize, physicians will move or be forced into retirement. Health care jobs will be eliminated, sending more individuals and families into poverty. There are over 725,000 In-Home Supportive Service (IHSS) providers in California.²³ These individuals are spread in every city and county in the state. A change in federal funding could lead to reductions in hours for the consumers these providers care for and a loss of work and wages for these caregivers. As there are more financial stressors on health care facilities, training of the next generation of health care workers and physicians will be the first things to get cut. With the majority of Californians living in health professional shortage areas, these cuts will set California further back on training of behaviorists, allied health care workers, and physicians. In rural communities in particular, where hospitals and clinics are the biggest employer, a facility closure impacts the whole community, shuttering Main Street and having a ripple effect on the local economy.

The people and families you represent need relief from rising health care costs and the financial uncertainty they bring. Yet any proposal to cut Medicaid will increase health care costs for all working people, since providers will shift the cost of care onto families, even as the ultra-wealthy reap a windfall.

In closing, we can't go back, and it is imperative that we continue to protect access to health care for millions of Californians and reject proposals to cap or cut Medi-Cal. We urge you to work with your colleagues to send a strong message to the Speaker and House leaders that any cuts to the Medicaid program are unacceptable and that action must be taken to preserve access to care. We welcome your thoughtful consideration of the concerns raised here and urge you to not include Medicaid cuts in your committees' reconciliation bills.

²¹ CA Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 3 Agenda, February 27, 2025 <u>02272025-dhcs-part-i-final.pdf</u>
²²UC Berkeley Labor Center, Medi-Cal Enrollment and Spending by District and County 2024, February 3, 2025. <u>Medi-Cal Enrollment and Spending by District and County 2024 - UC Berkeley Labor Center</u>

²³ CA Department of Social Services In-Home Supportive Services December 2024 Program Data: https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/ihss/program-data

Sincerely,

Hoang Nguyen

Director of Government Affairs

AAPI Equity Alliance

Stacy Kono Executive Director

Hand in Hand: The Domestic Employers

Network

Mario A. Ortega

CEO

Abrazar, Inc.

Christine Smith

Policy & Legislative Advocate Health Access California

Clarissa Woo Hermosillo

Director of Economic Justice Project/Deputy

Director of Advocacy

ACLU of Southern California

Michael Lighty President

Healthy California Now

Walter Blair Administrator

AFSCME District Council 36

Roxanne Carrillo Garza

Senior Director

Healthy Contra Costa

Jenny Seon

Legal Service Director

Ahri Center

Candice Adam-Medefind Executive Director

Healthy House Within a MATCH Coalition

Adam J. Landeros, MPH, MS (he/they)

Founder & Principal Consultant

AJL Community Health LLC

Seng S. Yang

Director

Hmong Cultural Center of Butte County

Steve Eckert

CEO

Alum Rock Counseling Center

Blair Barker Program Officer

Hospital to Home Alliance of Ventura County

Heather Cooper Ortner President and CEO

Alzheimer's Los Angeles

Dennessa Atiles

Organizer

Indivisible CA: StateStrong

Bethany Sasaki, NP, CNM

American Association of Birth Centers

California Chapter

Carmen Estrada
Executive Director

Inland Caregiver Resource Center

Jessica Kemper-Lytle

State Director, Northern California

American Atheists

Dr. Ben Jauregui Board Chair

Inland Coalition on Aging

Clifford Tasner President

Americans for Democratic Action, Southern

California

Jana Wright Director of Policy

Insure the Uninsured Project

Dr. Marketa Houskova, DNP, RN

ANA\California

Eli Veitzer

President and CEO

Jewish Family Service Los Angeles

Boyu Liu Yasmin Peled

Manager Director, California Government Affairs

Justice in Aging

Annunziata van Voorene MSW, LCSW

Founder & CEO Any Positive Change

Angeles Del Sol ADHC

Eunice Chun **Executive Director**

Korean American Community Services

Sonya Tianang Yeri Shon

Executive Director Associate Director

API Equality-LA Korean Community Center of the East Bay

Maggie Kraft William Glasser **Executive Director** President, CEO Area 1 Agency on Aging Language World, Inc.

Nikki Dominguez Mar Velez Policy Director Director of Policy

Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern

California (AJSOCAL)

Latino Coalition for a Healthy California

Vaughn Villaverde, MPH Caitlin Chan Director of Advocacy Executive Director

Asian Americans for Community Involvement

(AACI)

Legal Assistance for Seniors

Rejie Marie Baloyos Peg Corley **Executive Director Executive Director** Asian Resources, Inc. LGBTQ Center OC Amy Westling Beth Southorn **Executive Director**

Association of Regional Center Agencies

(ARCA)

Executive Director

LifeSTEPS

Peter Gee Robert Phillips

President and CEO Director of Service Programs Little Tokyo Service Center Baywell Health

Susan Cortopassi **Executive Director**

Behavioral Health and Recovery Services Contractors' Association of San Mateo County Scott Suckow Executive Director

Liver Coalition of San Diego

Paul D. Grossman

Executive Counsel Beyond the ADA

Kyoko Takayama

Steering Committee member

Livermore Indivisible

Maraky Alemseged Los Angeles Organizer

Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI)

Karen Reside President

Long Beach Gray Panthers

LaKisha G. Camese, JD

Policy Analyst

Black Women for Wellness

Black Women for Wellness Action Project

Joey Hernandez-Espinoza

Director of Policy & Community Building

Los Angeles LGBT Center

Dannie Cesena, MPH

Director

CA LGBTQ Health and Human Services

Network

Tori Kjer

Executive Director

Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust

Meron Agonafer Policy Director

Cal Voices

Kevin Gruenberg Executive Director

Love, Dad

Le Ondra Clark Harvey, Ph.D.

Executive Director, California Access Coalition CEO. California Behavioral Health Association

Ted Jackson

Director of Public Policy and Community

Engagement

Marin Center for Independent Living

Maura Gibney **Executive Director**

California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform Maternal and Child Health Access

Lynn Kersey

Executive Director

Itzúl Gutierrez

Senior Policy Advocate

California Association of Food Banks

Jenny Farrell **Executive Director**

Mental Health Advocacy Services

Emily Francke

President

California Association of Nurse Anesthesiology Mid-City Community Advocacy Network

Diana Ross **Executive Director**

(CANA)

Kim Rothschild **Executive Director** California Association of Public Authorities for

Nishea Trinidad Executive Director

Mighty Community Advocacy

Rhonda M. Smith

Executive Director Policy Director

California Black Health Network Mixteco/Indigena Community Organizing

Project (MICOP)

Vanessa Terán

Jasmine Pettis Marquez, MPH, IBCLC

Executive Director California Breastfeeding Coalition

Diana J. Honig Co-Chair, Healthcare Task Force Multi-Faith ACTION Coalition

Barbra McLendon and Juan Carlos Guerrero

Co-Chairs

California Coalition on Family Caregiving

Nabila Dunbar

Director of Advocacy and Engagement National Council of Jewish Women Los

Angeles

California Community Foundation Skyler Rosellini

Assistant Director of California Policy National Health Law Program

Alexis Heaton Sophia Mendoza President

Interim Executive Director

National Union of Healthcare Workers California Coverage & Health Initiatives

Char Velasco Angelica Ramos Program Assistant President

National Women's Political Caucus of California California Coverage & Health Initiatives

Donata Bohanec Arnold Sowell Jr. **Executive Director** Executive Director California Elder Justice Coalition NextGen CA

Kent Woo **Brett Eisenberg**

Executive Director Executive Director

California Foundation for Independent Living NICOS Chinese Health Coalition

Centers (CFILC)

David Diskin

Kimberly Wyard

President CEO

California Freethought Day Northeast Valley Health Corporation

Catherina Isidro Betzabel Estudillo

Executive Director Chief Engagement Officer

California Health Advocates Nourish California Carlos Alarcon
Health Policy Analyst
California Immigrant Policy Con

California Immigrant Policy Center

Jonathan Paik
Executive Director
OC Action

OO ACION

Janie Whiteford President

California In-Home Supportive Services

Consumer Alliance (CICA)

Olivia Loewy Owner

Olivia Loewy, Ph.D. and Associates

Jason Sullivan-Halpern, J.D.

Executive Director

California Long-Term Care Ombudsman

Association (CLTCOA)

Grace Li CEO On Lok

Liz Donnelly

Legislative Action and Advocacy Committee

Chair

California Nurse-Midwives Association

Gaby Hernandez Executive Director

ORALE

Georgia Brewer Associate Director California OneCare

Caroline Sanders Senior Policy Director

California Pan-Ethnic Health Network

Mimi Demissew Executive Director Our Family Coalition

Drew Furedi, Ed.D President & CEO Para Los Niños

Jason Ford

Executive Director

California Physicians Alliance

Jennifer Greppi

Director of Parent Policy Parent Voices California

Carlos Lopez

Legislative Advocate

California School Employees Association

June Simmons
President and CEO

Partners in Care Foundation

Janice Bailey
Executive Director

Excedite Director

California Senior Legislature

Ramla Sahid
Executive Director

Partnership for the Advancement of New

Americans

Sarah Diaz

Policy and Media Coordinator California WIC Association

Harry Bruell President/CEO

Val Sheehan

CEO

CalPACE

Luis Bravo

PathPoint

Executive Director

Personal Assistance Services Council

Salma V. Torres

Director of Education and Generational

Advocacy CalPride

Josh Komo

Associate Minister

Pilgrim United Church of Christ

Mark Cloutier

CEO

Caminar

Madison Shockley II

Pastor

Pilgrim United Church of Christ

Kathy Mendes Policy Associate

Caring Across Generations

Norberto Gonzalez State Director

Poder Latinx

Vanessa Bohm

Program Director

Central American Resource Center, San

Francisco

Tasha Henneman, Ed.D.

Chief of Policy & Government Affairs, PRC

Director, Black Leadership Council

Cymone A. Reyes CEO/Founder

Central Valley Gender Health & Wellness

Juliet Sims Director

Prevention Institute

Jesus Martinez

Executive Director Central Valley Immigrant Integration

Collaborative

Philip Yaeger

Executive Director & CEO Radiant Health Centers

Teresa Morales

Health Program Coordinator Centro Binacional Para El Desarrollo Indigena Raizes Collective

Oaxaqueño

Isabel Lopez **Executive Director**

Kerry Venegas **Executive Director**

Changing Tides Family Services

Lori Johnson, FNP

Assistant Medical Director RotaCare San Rafael

Cheryll Grover President

Chapter 57 Retirees, AFSCME

Payal Sawhney Executive Director Saahas for Cause

David Heitstuman

Colleen Corrigan

Senior Policy Associate

Children Now

CEO

Sacramento LGBT Community Center

Terry Kim

Director of Government Relations & Advocacy

Children's Institute

Jenny Ton

Co-Executive Director

Safer Together

Peter Ng President & CEO

Chinatown Service Center

Ian M. Seruelo, Esq. SDIRC Chair

San Diego Immigrant Rights Consortium

(SDIRC)

Vincent Pan

Co-Executive Director Chinese for Affirmative Action Anne Donnelly

Director, State Health Care Policy San Francisco AIDS Foundation

Debbie Toth

President & CEO Choice in Aging

Deena Lahn

Vice President, Policy and External Affairs San Francisco Community Clinic Consortium

Cornelia Woodworth

Policy Associate Citizens for Choice Beth Malinowski

Government Affairs Advocate

SEIU California

Angelica Salas

Executive Director Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights Riko Mendez

Chief Elected Officer SEIU Local 521

(CHIRLA)

Kevin Aslanian Executive Director

Coalition Of California Welfare Rights

Organizations

Chris O'Hanlon, MSW **Executive Director**

Senior Advocates of the Desert

Faustino Alvarez Executive Director

Community Access Center

Ligia Montano

Organizing and Partnership Director

Senior and Disability Action

Maria Alvarez

Programs Director

Community Access Center

Sandra J. Winter, PhD, MHA

Executive Director Senior Coastsiders

Elba Gonzalez-Mares

Executive Director

Community Health Initiative

Huy Tran

Executive Director

Services, Immigrant Rights and Education

Network (SIREN)

Debra Wood

Director of Programs and Policy

Community Health Initiative of Orange County

Melinda Forstey

Chief Operating Officer

Serving Seniors

Julia Barba

Director, Community Programs Community Health Partnership Bianca Blomquist California Director Small Business Majority Allison Estrada Kevin Al Perez
Doctor of Family Medicine President
Comunidad de Angue Can Diago

Comunidad de Apoyo San Diego Somos Familia Valle

Matthew Hulse Shakeel Syed
Executive Director Executive Director
Contra Costa Senior Legal Services South Asian Network

Garrett Stenson, MSW Margaret A. Baker, DrPH

Program Director Convener

C.O.R.E. Medical Clinic, Inc.

South Bay People Power

Michelle Cabrera Mandy Diec

Executive Director California Deputy Director

County Behavioral Health Directors Association Southeast Asia Resource Action Center

(SEARAC)

Robert Panas

Carlos Marquez III Elizabeth A. Lopez Executive Director Executive Director

County Welfare Directors Association of

California

Ariel Simms

Southern California Immigration Project

Irene Kao 'Alisi Tulua Executive Director Executive Director

Courage California Southern California Pacific Islander Community

Response Team (SoCal PICRT)

Dennis Cuevas-Romero Darlene Kiyan

Vice President of Government Affairs President & CEO
CPCA Advocates St. Barnabas Senior Services

Noé Páramo Jim Mangia Legislative Advocate President & CEO

CRLA Foundation St. John's Community Health

Brittany Zazueta Cymone A. Reyes Executive Director Executive Director Dayle McIntosh Center for the Disabled Stockton Pride Inc.

ayle McIntosh Center for the Disabled Stockton Finde Inc.

President and CEO Lead Organizer
Disability Belongs Swing Left Tri-Valley

Gregory Cramer

Associate Director of Public Policy

Disability Rights California

Chanchanit Martorell Executive Director

Thai Community Development Center (Thai

CDC)

Sawait Seyoum

Senior Policy Advocate

Disability Rights California

Katherine Hunt Thomas

Director of Advocacy and Disability Rights

Attorney

The Ability Center

Silvia Yee Policy Director

Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund

(DREDF)

Jordan Lindsey
Executive Director
The Arc of California

Judy Mark

President

Disability Voices United

Dani Muñoz

Interim Executive Director

The Center for Sexuality & Gender Diversity

Camila Chavez
Executive Director

Dolores Huerta Foundation

Faith Colburn

Director of Advocacy
The Children's Partnership

Grey Gardner

California State Director Drug Policy Alliance Gabrielle Tilley

Associate Director of Policy and Partnerships The Los Angeles Trust for Children's Health

Serom Sanftner VP of Programs

East Bay Innovations

Rebecca Hanson Executive Director

The Shirley Ware Education Center

Kristie Sepulveda-Burchit

Executive Director

Educate. Advocate.

Brian Poth

Executive Director

The Source LGBT+ Center

Alor Calderon Director

Employee Rights Center (ERC)

Michele Magar Supervising Attorney

The Tanya Project: A Medical-Legal Partnership for Women with Cancer

Devon Gray President

End Poverty in California

Richard L. Zaldivar

Executive Director and Founder

The Wall Las Memorias

Mariana Moore Senior Director

Ensuring Opportunity Campaign

Stephen Vernon, MFT Founding Member/Director Therapists for Single Payer Tony Hoang Sylvie Hurat Executive Director Co-Lead

Equality California Together We Will/Indivisible - Los Gatos

Paulina Olvera Cáñez Paulina Angel Executive Director Founder/Director

Espacio Migrante Transgender Resource, Advocacy and Network

Service

Nancy Halpern Ibrahim Doug Moore Executive Director Executive Director

Esperanza Community Housing Corporation UDW AFSCME Local 3930

Shannon Olivieri Hovis Peter Zschiesche Vice President of Public Affairs Board Member

Essential Access Health United Taxi Workers of San Diego

Kathleen Kelly Flower Alvarez-Lopez

Executive Director Co-Director

Family Caregiver Alliance, National Center on

Caregiving

Universidad Popular California

Lisa Brabo Amber Guerra

CEO Advocacy Coordinator Family Service Agency of Santa Barbara Venice Family Clinic

County

Courtney Armstrong Uyen Hoang
Director of Government Affairs Executive Director

First 5 Association of California Viet Rainbow of Orange County

Rev. Matthew Pargeter-Villarreal Maria Lemus
Minister Executive Director
First Unitarian Universalist Church of Stockton Vision y Compromiso

Dr. Rebecca Ryan ShaRon Heath Program Director Executive Director

Foothill College: Community Health Worker Voices of Recovery San Mateo County

Program

Kevan Insko Sandra O. Poole Director Health Policy Advocate

Friends Committee on Legislation of California Western Center on Law and Poverty

Michael E Sorensen, MPA Laura Ponchick Executive Director President

Friends Outside William C. Bannerman Foundation

Rafael Vaquerano
President & CEO
Gardner Health Services

Jess Fitzpatrick
Executive Director
Gender Alchemy

Ace Anaya
Campaign Coordinator
Gender Justice LA

Adriana Jimenez CEO Give for a Smile

Shimica Gaskins President & CEO GRACE/End Child Poverty California

Individual signees: Beverly A. Karnatz Eric Rubalcaba Manisha Sharma, MD, FAAFP Molly Davies
President and CEO
Wise & Healthy Aging

Kristin McGuire Executive Director Young Invincibles

Gabriel Garcia
Policy and Advocacy Director
Youth Alive

Jennifer Masuda Executive Director Yu-Ai Kai Japanese American Community Senior Service

The Honorable Young Kim The Honorable Doug LaMalfa The Honorable Greg Landsman The Honorable Nick Langworthy The Honorable James Lankford The Honorable Bob Latta The Honorable Laurel Lee The Honorable Mike Levin The Honorable Sam Liccardo The Honorable Ted Lieu The Honorable Zoe Lofgren The Honorable Ben Luján The Honorable Roger Marshall The Honorable Doris O. Matsui The Honorable Jennifer McClellan The Honorable Tom McClintock The Honorable Rob Menendez The Honorable Mariannette Miller-Meeks The Honorable Dave Min The Honorable Kevin Mullin The Honorable Jay Obernolte The Honorable Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

CC: The Honorable Pete Aguilar The Honorable Rick Allen The Honorable Jake Auchincloss The Honorable Troy Balderson The Honorable Nanette Barragán The Honorable John Barrasso The Honorable Michael F. Bennett The Honorable Cliff Bentz The Honorable Ami Bera The Honorable Gus Bilirakis The Honorable Marsha Blackburn The Honorable Julia Brownley The Honorable Ken Calvert The Honorable Kat Cammack The Honorable Maria Cantwell The Honorable Salud Carbajal The Honorable Buddy Carter The Honorable Troy Carter The Honorable Bill Cassidy The Honorable Kathy Castor The Honorable Judy Chu The Honorable Gil Cisneros

The Honorable Yvette Clark
The Honorable John Cornyn
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The Honorable Neal Dunn
The Honorable Gabe Evans
The Honorable Julie Fedorchak
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The Honorable Vince Fong

The Honorable Laura Friedman
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The Honorable Russ Fulcher
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The Honorable Tina Smith
The Honorable Darren Soto
The Honorable Eric Swalwell
The Honorable Mark Takano
The Honorable Mike Thompson
The Honorable John Thune
The Honorable Thom Tillis
The Honorable Paul Tonko
The Honorable Norma Torres
The Honorable Lori Trahan
The Honorable Derek Tran
The Honorable David G. Valadao

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The Honorable Juan Vargas
The Honorable Marc Veasey
The Honorable Mark R. Warner
The Honorable Raphael Warnock
The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
The Honorable Maxine Waters
The Honorable Randy Weber
The Honorable Peter Welch

The Honorable Sheldon Whitehouse The Honorable George T. Whitesides

The Honorable Todd Young