

**Health Care Reform Proposals Hold Promise for Diverse Communities:
Getting California Ready**

Executive Summary

By the Having Our Say Coalition and Ninez Ponce, PhD

All Californians need the opportunity to achieve full health and live healthy lives. But too many of California's diverse communities have historically lacked health care coverage and have not been able to fully participate in the health care system. These inequalities and failures of our current system mean poor health for our communities. Fortunately, we have the solutions and can take the steps to begin to create a system that works for all of us.

This brief analyzes the impact of the three different health care reform proposals that have been introduced by Governor Schwarzenegger, Assembly Speaker Núñez and Senate President Pro Tem Perata, and Senator Kuehl. With our state leaders prioritizing health care reform, we have a window of opportunity we cannot waste. By understanding the composition of the newly insured and their current regular source of care, we can better prepare our health care system to be responsive and accountable to meeting the needs of our multicultural state.

Key Findings:

- All communities will experience an increase in coverage, and for the first time, the insured population will begin to reflect California's diverse demographics.
- Communities of color will experience a significant increase in the number of insured, with 7 in 10 of the newly insured from communities of color compared to less than half of whom are currently insured. This is an additional 2.4 – 3.1 million under the Núñez/Perata and Governor's proposals respectively, and 3.4 million in Kuehl's proposal,
- There will be almost 2 million more people (under Núñez/Perata and the Governor's plan) and more than 2.5 million more people (under Kuehl's proposal) who will need language assistance to access health care services.
- The reform proposals are designed to increase low-income Californians' access to health coverage and will increase the number of low-income individuals and families who will be insured by 2.6 to 3.6 million.
- Over 60% of the currently insured who identified a community clinic or public hospital as their regular source of care are people of color. Community clinics and public hospitals will continue to be a source of care for many of the newly insured, and as a result, continued support of the safety net is critical.

These findings demonstrate that the health care reform proposals provide a positive step toward creating a stronger health care system. However, addressing issues of coverage is just part of the equation as we seek to reform California's health care system. We also need to make sure health coverage results in care that serves everyone and includes everyone, taking into account our

cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The following recommendations by the Having Our Say coalition seek to provide viable solutions moving us closer to a healthier California.

1. Guarantee equal access for the people who do not speak English well.

Adopt strong cultural and language access standards in the state purchasing pool and translate all information regarding eligibility, benefits, and services into multiple languages.

2. Health care reform must meet the needs of diverse communities.

Establish mechanisms to identify and eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities and ensure communities of color have equal representation in the planning, development and oversight of the new program.

3. Health care must be equally accessible to all communities.

Health care must be affordable and coverage must be comprehensive.

4. Adequately prepare public and private providers for the newly insured.

Resources must be allocated for public hospitals and community clinics.

California's future prosperity depends on the outcome of the current health care reform debate. We must seize this historic opportunity to create a health care system that works for everyone. This is the only way we can reach our full potential and achieve a healthy and prosperous California. To download a copy of the full brief please visit www.cpehn.org.

Having Our Say is a statewide coalition comprised of more than thirty organizations working to ensure that communities of color have a voice in the health care reform debate and that the solutions provide equal access for all Californians. Together we identified the following key principles necessary to providing quality health care:

1. Provide universal and affordable health care coverage for all Californians.
2. Ensure equity of responsibility based on financial resources.
3. Assure an efficient health care system to sustain universal coverage.
4. Assure equitable, high quality health care for all.
5. Prioritize prevention by encouraging preventive care and creating healthy communities.

(Please see next page for a list of the Having Our Say coalition member organizations.)

Having Our Say member organizations:

ACLU of Southern California
American Cancer Society, California Division, Inc.
Applied Research Center
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Asian Health Services
Asian Pacific American Legal Center
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organization
Bay Area Immigrant Rights Coalition
California Black Health Network
California Catholic Conference
California Immigrant Policy Center
California Latinas for Reproductive Justice
California Optometric Association
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network
California Partnership
California Rural Indian Health Board
California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation
Central Valley Partnership
Centro Binacional Para el Desarrollo Indigena Oaxaqueño, Inc.
Chinatown Service Center
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles
Filipino American Service Group, Inc.
The Greenlining Institute
K.W. Lee Center for Leadership
Korean Resource Center
Latino Coalition for a Healthy California
Latino Health Alliance
Latino Issues Forum
Madera Coalition for Community Justice
National Health Law Program
National Immigration Law Center
New Alliance Organizing Project
Out of Many, One
PALS for Health
Pat Brown Institute, Health Policy Outreach Center
Services, Immigrant Rights, and Education Network
South Asian Network
The Opportunity Agenda
Vision y Compromiso/Promotora Network