



CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC HOSPITALS AND HEALTH SYSTEMS

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California's Public Hospitals Applaud Passage of Health Care Reform Measure

Statement by Melissa Stafford Jones, President and CEO, CAPH

OAKLAND, CA, March 21, 2010 – California's public hospitals applaud today's vote in Congress in support of health care reform, the most significant overhaul of the health care delivery system in modern times. The importance of this momentous victory cannot be overstated: it truly will mean the difference between good health and poor health for millions of Americans – and for a great many people, the difference between life and death.

This legislation will provide millions more Americans with timely access to health care. Such access will result in healthier outcomes and less reliance on avoidable – and costly – emergency visits and hospital stays.

Every day, California's public hospitals see first-hand the tremendous toll of being uninsured. Our providers deliver high quality, comprehensive care to millions of low-income Californians. We know that those without insurance often wait longer to seek health services – for preventive care, screening for life-threatening diseases and diagnoses of these diseases, and treatment for serious conditions such as high blood pressure and cancer. The consequences can be devastating. Our patients arrive sicker, and often in need of more extensive treatment, than those who have insurance.

Despite our public hospitals' success in providing high quality care to so many Californians, with 6.7 million uninsured people in the state, the need is just too great. The economic crisis has only exacerbated this situation, as more and more people lose their jobs and their health insurance. A recent UCLA study showed that fully **one-quarter** of all Californians lacked health insurance for at least part of the past year. This is simply unacceptable.

This health care reform measure isn't perfect. We appreciate improvements that were included to support public hospitals' efforts to provide care, yet we know more work remains to be done. But we can't wait for perfection. Too much is at stake, and we must move forward to fix a health care delivery system that is long overdue for reform. This move is a very strong step in the right direction and we welcome it with open arms.

We are grateful to Speaker Nancy Pelosi for her leadership in passing this critical measure, and await a vote on reconciliation in the Senate, where Senators Feinstein and Boxer have been instrumental in supporting health care reform efforts that will enable public hospitals to better serve their patients. As providers at the core of the health care safety net, California's public hospitals have created innovative systems of care that will be key to the implementation of reform. We look forward to helping to bring this historic effort to fruition in the months and years ahead.

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