

March 3, 2021

The Honorable Richard Pan, Chair  
Senate Health Committee  
State Capitol, Room 2191  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: SB 56 (Durazo) – Health4All [SUPPORT]**

Dear Senator Pan,

The Children's Partnership writes in **strong support of SB 56 (Durazo)**, which would provide comprehensive full-scope Medi-Cal to all income-eligible seniors, regardless of immigration status. Removing this unjust exclusion takes our state one step closer to universal health coverage, ensures that no senior is barred from access to health care just because of where they were born, and supports the stability and health of millions of children who rely on their grandparents. California is stronger when everyone has access to health care.

The Children's Partnership (TCP) is a California-based children's advocacy organization committed to improving the lives of marginalized children where they live, learn, and play with breakthrough solutions at the intersection of research, policy, and community engagement. Since 1993, TCP has been a leading voice for children and a critical resource for communities across California and the nation, working every day to champion policies that provide all children with the resources and opportunities they need to thrive.

California is home to 9 million children, of which half (4.5 million children) live in immigrant families. As we seek to support the healthy development of every child, meeting the specific needs of California's diverse children and the conditions in which they are raised is critical – including the health of those who raise them. The health of each of us is deeply interconnected with that of every Californian and this is especially true for our children. Grandparents in the U.S. care for 1 out of 4 children under the age of five. They are a major influence on children, particularly children of color, who are more likely to live in households with their grandparents. Public programs should not exclude any group of people from these safety-net services, especially in a public health emergency that is disproportionately impacting our communities of color and seniors.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made more visible and exacerbated the magnitude of racial health disparities. These disparities result in deadly outcomes for undocumented Californians who are systematically excluded from our social safety net. While the state has set up temporary programs for the uninsured to access COVID-related care, these barely scratch the surface of the health crises that plague our immigrant communities—especially elderly individuals whom the virus has preyed upon. Undocumented seniors who have gone years without so much as a check-up may have unknown chronic conditions and need preventive care and treatment for all of their health concerns, not just COVID.

Today, California provides near-universal coverage for children, thanks in large part to Medi-Cal, the Affordable Care Act, and Health4All Kids. In 2015, California removed immigration status as an eligibility barrier for children to access full-scope Medi-Cal. The success of Health4All Kids has ensured

that over 250,000 children have enrolled in life-saving, comprehensive health coverage.<sup>1</sup> However, their parents and other undocumented Californians continue to lack access to health coverage. In a state where nearly 1 in 6 California children have at least one undocumented parent, providing coverage to every member of the family has important health and economic impacts. Research shows that health coverage increases among children already eligible for Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program when the adults they rely on become eligible as well.<sup>2</sup>

SB 56 continues California's leadership in improving on the Affordable Care Act (ACA) by expanding comprehensive Medi-Cal coverage to one segment of the largest population within California's remaining uninsured: undocumented adults. It would start to close the state's largest coverage gap and move us one step closer to universal coverage.

Immigrants are a critical part of the very fabric of our social and economic fabric, and they must be included in order to create a truly equitable health system in California. We can continue the success of California's efforts to get to universal coverage by becoming the first state in the nation to remove immigration status as a barrier to full-scope Medi-Cal for all income eligible undocumented seniors.

For these reasons, The Children's Partnership is proud to support SB 56 (Durazo) and urges your strong support of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mayra Alvarez".

Mayra E. Alvarez, MHA

President

Cc: Members of the Senate Health Committee  
Senator Durzo, Author

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<sup>1</sup> Lucia, Laurel. Towards Universal Health Coverage: Expanding Medi-Cal to Low-Income Undocumented Adults. Center for Labor Research and Education, University of California, Berkeley. February 2019. <http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/medi-cal-undocumented-adults>

<sup>2</sup> "Medicaid Expansion For Adults Had Measurable 'Welcome Mat' Effects On Their Children," J Hudson, A Moriya, *Health Affairs*, September 2017. <http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/36/9/1643.abstract>