

# Having Our Say!

Communities of Color's Stake in Health Care Reform

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: July 1, 2008  
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Press Release

### **New Report Calls on State to Prioritize Improving the Health of Central Valley Communities**

Central Valley counties found most in need of improved neighborhood conditions that prevent obesity, diabetes, and other chronic conditions

Fresno, California – Seven of the ten counties with the highest need for health-promoting resources and infrastructure are in the San Joaquin Valley, according to the study released today by the Having our Say Coalition. The report, *The Path to Healthy Communities: Mapping California's Priorities*, ranked counties throughout California using key factors known to be related to health, including poverty, chronic diseases, health insurance status, and access to open space for physical activity.

"Too many of our communities lack the fundamentals of healthy living - clean air, full grocery stores and playgrounds for our kids," explains Ellen Wu, Executive Director of the California Pan-Ethnic Health Network and a lead organization for the Having Our Say coalition. "This report provides us with a road map and a vision for how the state can strategically move forward in helping our communities most in need."

From the results of the study, these efforts should be targeted to the Central Valley.

"This comes as no surprise to our communities," Says Dr. Helen Jones. "We see the impact of this underinvestment every day in our overcrowded emergency rooms, high rates of chronic diseases, and skyrocketing health care costs."

According to the 2005 California Health Interview Survey, 65 percent of San Joaquin Valley adults are overweight or obese. The consequences of obesity are seen in rising rates of chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, cancer, arthritis, stroke, and hypertension.

"Poor air quality, over abundance of fast food, and absence of parks are community level problems that need policy level solutions," states Genoveva Isla-Hooker, Project Coordinator for the Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program. "By investing in whole communities – building playgrounds, providing healthy school

lunches, and keeping our streets safe, we can begin to turn the tide of the current chronic disease epidemic.”

The report calls for action by the Governor and State Legislature to address the epidemic of chronic disease – asking for resources and legislative solutions to change the way we plan and design our communities.

“We need the state to support local efforts to incorporate health into their city planning and land use policies,” said Jennifer Hernandez, an active member of the Having Our Say Coalition. “When communities are being designed, health needs to be a top priority.”

Two bills are currently moving through Sacramento that would provide tools and resources needed to place health at the center of future planning and development efforts. “It is time for strong, visionary leadership,” states Martin Martinez, policy Director at the California Pan-Ethnic Health Network. “The passage of AB 1472 (Leno), the California Healthy Places Act, and AB 211 (Jones), would send a clear message that California is committed to improving the health of *all* its communities.”

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For pdf’s of the full California Map and the Central Valley Map from the report, please visit CPEHN’s press room, at [cpehn.org](http://cpehn.org).

### **PRESS CONFERENCE DETAILS:**

**WHEN:** July 1, 2008 at 10:00a.m.

**WHERE:** Fresno Metro Ministry

1055 North Van Ness Avenue, Suite H (between Belmont & Olive in the Tower Dist.)  
Fresno, CA 93728

### **Featured Speakers:**

- Ellen Wu, Principle Author and Executive Director of the California Pan-Ethnic Health Network (CPEHN)
- Richard P. Yanes, JD, Executive Director, Fresno Metro Ministries
- Phoebe Seaton, Directing Attorney, California Rural Legal Assistance, Delano office.
- Juan Rangel, student and resident of Kerman. Member of Youth Leadership Institute.
- Margarita Guzmán, president of Comite Asma
- Genoveva Isla-Hooker, Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program
- Helen Jones, MD, FACP, Internist practicing in Fresno CA, Co-Chair of the CMA Foundation 2008 Obesity Toolkit for Providers