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Why People of Color Should Support California Health Care Reform

New America Media, Commentary, Denise Adams-Simms, Dong Suh and Ellen Wu , Posted: Jan 28, 2008

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Editor's Note: The California health reform bill ABx11, which would provide coverage to many currently uninsured, goes into the Senate today. A state wide coalition of communities of color working on health reform, named Having Our Say, argues that this bill is a great chance to help people who really need it. Denise Adams-Simms, Dong Suh and Ellen Wu from Having Our Say, contributed this comment.

Today our Senators decide the fate of 3.6 million Californians, and their ability to get health insurance. ABx11 will be voted on in Senate Health and the vote is very close – too close – given what is at stake. This bill, negotiated by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and legislative leaders, Assembly Speaker Fabian Núñez and Senate President Pro Tem Don Perata, creates a framework that builds on our current system and will provide insurance to millions of low-income communities of color. Of the newly insured, 70% will be from communities of color and for the first time, the insured population will begin to reflect the diversity of California. While ABx11 is not perfect – no policy ever is – it has a lot of positive provisions that will help millions of Californians achieve full health and live healthy lives. For at least five good reasons, ABx11 holds a lot of promise for communities of color.

1. All children in families who make less than 300% of the federal poverty level (\$61,956 for a family of four) will be insured through Medi-Cal or Healthy Families. In addition, there are over 50,000 children that are at risk of losing their health insurance in the next two years, and this bill, with funding through a ballot initiative, will ensure that the Children's Health Initiatives will have enough money to maintain their programs. To not pass ABx11 would be gambling with our children's future. It's time that we provide our children with the security that they can get the health care they need.

2. Finally, low-income adults and parents will have options for health care coverage. For over forty years we have provided assistance to low-income children, families, and the elderly to get health care, leaving out low-income adults who do not have children. By expanding public programs, ABX11 creates a structure that enables low-income Californians to have somewhere to go for care.

3. Most of us who have health insurance receive it through our employer. Unfortunately, not every employer provides health benefits, or pays their fair share to make sure our workforce is healthy and productive. ABx11 expands workers' access to health insurance by requiring employers to offer coverage or pay into a statewide purchasing pool. And people in the purchasing pool will receive financial assistance so their coverage is affordable.

4. Currently California's Medi-Cal reimbursement rates are among the lowest in the country, making it difficult to attract providers to accept Medi-Cal patients. ABx11 will increase reimbursement rates, increasing access for low-income families, and helping our community clinics and county hospitals. Our Medi-Cal providers deserve appropriate compensation for their services and this bill sets up funding

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J Cir on Jan 28, 2008 at 13:33:59 said:

system to do so.

5. People will no longer be denied health insurance due to pre-existing conditions. Many of the uninsured do not have health insurance because health plans will simply not accept them due to previous illnesses or chronic diseases. We have allowed our health plans to cherry pick their members for too long. ABx11 puts a stop to this practice and requires health plans to accept all applicants.

To do nothing now means continuing to live with the status quo, which cannot be acceptable. If ABx11 gets approved, we will still have a lot of work ahead of us, but it lays an important foundation to build upon. Let's not let perfection be the enemy of the good. Let's pass ABx11. The future of California depends on it.

Denise Adams-Simms is executive director of California Black Health Network; Dong Suh, is associate director of Asian Health Services; and Ellen Wu is executive director of California Pan-Ethnic Health Network. They are part of Having Our Say, a statewide coalition of over 30 community of color organizations working to ensure that health care reform efforts address the needs of our communities. For more information about the coalition go to www.cpehn.org/havingoursay.php.

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Well, I'm caucasian and therefore a person of color. Perhaps the title of this leftist drivel should have been "Why Non-Whites Should Support A Massive, Debt-Incurring, Socialist

Spotlight
Health Care Debacle That Would Be Titanically Mismanaged By The Inept Government Of California."





Subscription



A vertical advertisement for the Oakland Ballet Company. At the top is a photograph of three ballerinas in red and white costumes performing around a Christmas tree. Below the photo, the text reads: "Ronn Guidi's NUTCRACKER" (with "NUTCRACKER" in red), "Oakland Ballet Company", "PARAMOUNT THEATRE, OAKLAND", "MICHAEL MORGAN, CONDUCTING MEMBERS OF THE OAKLAND EAST BAY SYMPHONY", "December 18-24" (in yellow), "Tickets \$15 - \$50", "Ticketmaster.com (510) 625-8497", "Paramount Theatre (510) 465-6400", "Special ticket offers and more information:", and a red banner at the bottom with "OaklandBallet.org" in white.

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