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**LOCAL CHILDREN'S GROUPS AND BUSINESS LEADERS HIGHLIGHT  
URGENCY ON CHILDREN'S HEALTH COVERAGE**

*Message to Lawmakers: Special Legislative Session Must Produce Policy & Funding that  
Covers All Kids Now*

LOS ANGELES, Calif. --- Speaking for children in jeopardy of losing health insurance, business and faith leaders joined representatives of the Children's Health Initiative (CHI) of Greater Los Angeles to send a message to California's elected officials: cover all kids now!

The event was held in Los Angeles, where the county's CHI has enrolled more than 40,000 children into the locally funded Healthy Kids program while generating nearly 100,000 applications for Medi-Cal and Healthy Families.

Participating organizations included Valley Community Clinic, L.A. Care Health Plan, PICO California, and United Way of Los Angeles.

"30,000 kids and teens in Los Angeles County may lose their health coverage in the next 90 days," said Howard Kahn, CEO of L.A. Care Health Plan and co-convenor of the Children's Health Initiative of Greater Los Angeles. "The Governor and the Leadership of the Legislature have both put forward plans to cover all kids as part of comprehensive health reform, and we support them in their effort. Their success in health care reform is vital, and the kids need them to succeed."

According to the California Children's Health Initiatives, as many as 18 counties will be forced to disenroll children from their CHI programs next year, including as many as 30,000 children from Los Angeles County by February. Statewide, up to 40% of all children enrolled in CHIs are at risk of losing coverage by July 2008, and up to 66% will lose coverage by 2010 without additional funding.

Due to funding limitations, the CHI of Greater Los Angeles, like many of the 32 CHIs across the state, has been forced to cap enrollment in its locally-funded Healthy Kids program, preventing more uninsured kids from receiving much-needed comprehensive health care.

"Preventive care is essential to a child's long-term health, growth and development," said Paula Wilson, CEO of the Valley Community Clinic. "Ensuring all children have health insurance is the right thing to do for our kids and it needs to happen this year."

Studies overwhelmingly show that children with health insurance improve their attendance in school, and are more likely to get the care they need to ensure healthy development. Indeed, a recent study revealed that there was a 28% improvement in the number of children, enrolled in Healthy Kids, with a usual source of dental care.

“Business leaders understand that covering all kids is not just the right thing to do, it's good for business because it helps lower parents' absenteeism and loss of productivity that result when parents are out of work tending to sick children,” said Renee Fraser, PH.D, President & CEO Fraser Communications and current president of the National Association of Women Business Owners – LA Enterprise Institute. “But, I want to stress that not only is there strong business support for covering all kids, there is overwhelming voter support as well.”

Recent polls indicate that a majority of Californians – 82% – support making sure that all children in California have health insurance. These voters believe the goal of covering all kids is realistic and doable, even after being informed of the potential costs.

“Covering all children in America is not heroic. It is not excessive or extravagant. It is human,” said Pastor Ryan Bell of Seventh Day Adventist Church of Hollywood. “Now is the hour for California, one of the richest places in the world, to demonstrate its moral fiber by doing what is right and providing all children with health insurance.”

The California Children's Health Initiatives, United Way, PICO, L.A. Care Health Plan, Valley Community Clinic and others are part of a statewide coalition working to ensure that all children have access to comprehensive health coverage beginning in 2008.

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