

June 7, 2021

The Honorable Gavin Newsom Governor
State of California
State Capitol Sacramento, CA 95814



L.A. Care
HEALTH PLAN®

For All of L.A.

RE: 2021/2022 Budget: Support of Medi-Cal Expansion to 50+, Medi-Cal Asset Test Removal, & Permanent End to Suspension of Optional Benefits

Dear Governor Newsom:

L.A. Care Health Plan – the nation’s largest public plan with over 2.4 million enrolled Medi-Cal, Cal MediConnect (Dual Eligibles), PASC- SEIU Homecare Workers, and Covered California enrollees — writes in support of the proposed Medi-Cal expansion, Medi-Cal asset test removal included in the Legislature’s budget proposal, and the permanent end to the suspension of optional benefits. All of which will help protect the most vulnerable of Californians.

The Legislature’s proposal takes major steps to improve services for those who are underserved and at risk for significant health disparities. L.A. Care has long championed these efforts and believes that this year, the robust budget offers the greatest opportunity to take a positive step forward in enhancing the safety net. We believe that these three proposals included in the Legislature’s budget vision should be included in the final budget.

The expansion of Medi-Cal coverage to those who are 50 years of age and older, regardless of immigration status is an essential step for California to someday be able to thrive and will get the state one step closer to achieving universal coverage. California has already demonstrated principled leadership in extending healthcare coverage to all Medi-Cal-eligible children and young adults, regardless of immigration status. Undocumented Californians are deeply rooted in our state and provide significant economic, familial, and cultural contributions to our communities. Despite their vital place in California’s social and economic fabric, undocumented and uninsured Californians are denied basic health care because of where they were born.

The Legislature also includes the elimination of the Medi-Cal asset test for seniors, which would remove the “senior savings” penalty. The outdated Medi-Cal asset test causes financial instability for seniors by limiting their savings and withholding health coverage from those who maintain assets the state deems in excess of qualification limits. As the cost of living continues to rise, the asset test should be removed to allow seniors to access needed healthcare services while maintaining their dignity and financial stability. The elimination of the asset test in Medi-Cal, will ensure that seniors, and individuals with disabilities, with assets of more than \$2,000, do not lose, or are not denied, Medi-Cal coverage. This is an essential factor in caring for older adults in California.

We would also like to applaud you for the permanent end to the suspension of Medi-Cal optional benefits; specifically audiology and speech therapy, incontinence creams and washes, eyeglasses and contacts, and podiatric services from the original suspension delay proposed in the January budget. The uncertainty of benefits caused many Medi-Cal recipients stress and confusion regarding the future of their health and care and the permanent end to the suspension gives them valuable peace of mind.

When we invest in health coverage for those who are most vulnerable, we invest in the overall Health of our state. For these reasons, L.A. Care urges you to support these proposals from the Legislature.

Thank you for all your hard work for all of California – the state is better thanks to your leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Baackes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

John Baackes



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