

# COUNTY OF EL DORADO

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September 26, 2017

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senate  
331 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kamala Harris United States Senate  
United States Senate  
112 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators,

El Dorado County has made great progress in recent years with targeted funding and support from the Affordable Care Act. In a recent editorial by James Whipple (CEO Marshall Medical Center) and Jayne Moore (Senior Vice President El Dorado Savings Bank) talked about the need to protect access to health care coverage. "While the uncertainty and political debate may cause uneasiness, we believe that this is a prime opportunity to reaffirm a top priority: That Californians maintain access to quality, affordable coverage. The expansion of coverage has benefited people of all ages, incomes and circumstances".

Locally, tens of thousands of people have benefited from the ability to enroll in expanded Medi-Cal for those with low to moderate income including a significant in access for children and single adults. El Dorado County is diligently working to provide comprehensive health and behavioral health care for our residents and the provisions of the ACA have allowed us to be innovative as we expand our service delivery model. Without this coverage, citizens on limited incomes could flood the Emergency Rooms of our local hospitals including Marshall Medical Center and Barton Hospital for immediate care where federal law requires our hospitals to provide these services, but these patients would be without insurance to pay for that care. A substantial increase of uninsured patients could seriously jeopardize the financial stability of these local institutions.

El Dorado County has a growing population of senior citizens, many of whom are on limited incomes and would not be able to afford high insurance premium costs, should the ACA be changed or removed. Additionally, for the first time, many beneficiaries that were denied coverage under previous rules are accessing health care, preventative services, prescription medication and behavioral health care.

Under new rules, people now covered under the ACA stand to lose the guarantee that pre-existing conditions will be covered. Reductions in funding also impact the employment of many staff members at hospitals, supportive services (home health care for seniors), convalescent operations, pharmacies, and several other health agencies that the County relies on to supplement the health care system. This scenario will impact our local economy of jobs, sales tax revenues, rents/mortgages, and the domino effect of people not contributing or spending their dollars in El Dorado County.

We stand opposed to any proposal that dramatically restructures the Affordable Care Act (ACA). These measures would reverse the significant progress our County has made in reducing the number of uninsured residents. Capping the federal financial participation in Medicaid and ending the enhanced federal support for states choosing to expand coverage would undermine our efforts and erode the federal, state, and county partnership.

Our County sees first-hand how access to health and mental health care improves lives, educational attainment, and employment. In California, Medicaid benefits are delivered through a solid federal, state, and county partnership. Counties care for residents through our public hospitals and health systems, provide rural medical coverage, offer behavioral health services including mental health and substance use disorder treatment, administer public health services, and are responsible for social and health services eligibility functions. In short, California's 58 counties strive to provide timely and quality Medicaid services under the state Medi-Cal program.

Currently, there is proposed legislation that could severely affect our state. California could experience some of the deepest cuts of any other state and the per-capita cap on Medicaid spending would slash the federal contribution to all states by 26 percent in 2026 and 35 percent by 2036, compared to current law. Given our aggressive efforts to enroll families and individuals under the ACA, this kind of bill would cut Medicaid funding to our state by approximately 50 percent in 2026 according to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities.

We urge the Senate to reject bills that do not enable California to continue providing health care under the ACA. The financial foundation of the Medi-Cal program, which serves 1 in 3 Californians, will no longer be viable if such bills were to pass.

El Dorado County stands ready to support improvements to Medicaid and the ACA and strongly supports the bipartisan efforts underway to preserve and stabilize the ACA. We have learned many important lessons about outreach, retention, access, and continuity of care since the ACA was implemented. We stand ready to assist in preserving the Act's promise of quality, efficiency, and access to health care for all.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this critical fiscal and policy matter.

Sincerely,

Shiva Frentzen  
Chair, Board of Supervisors  
County of El Dorado