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California Begins to Confront Primary Care Workforce Crisis with \$100 Million Budget Investment

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – California Governor Jerry Brown signed the 2016-17 state budget into law today and with it began addressing the primary care workforce crisis that is gripping California’s most vulnerable and underserved communities.

“We are proud of the Governor and the legislature for investing \$100 million in the state’s primary care workforce pipeline this year and look forward to working with them on additional solutions moving forward,” said Carmela Castellano-Garcia, President and CEO of California’s largest community health center advocacy organization, CaliforniaHealth+ Advocates. “California is a national leader on health care coverage but we continue to struggle with access to care due to anemic health care provider levels.”

The budget investment came at the urging of a broad coalition of statewide healthcare organizations including The California Academy of Family Physicians (CAFP), CaliforniaHealth+ Advocates, and the California Medical Association (CMA).

According to a 2016 report “Horizon 2030: Meeting California’s Primary Care Workforce Needs,” California will need an estimated 8,243 additional primary care physicians by 2030, or 32% of its current workforce. Today, California’s ratio of primary care physicians participating in Medi-Cal is approximately half of the federal recommendation and six out of nine regions in California have a primary care provider shortage.

California’s lack of physician diversity and cultural understanding cripples it further. Latinos represent 40 percent of California’s population, but only represent 5 percent of physicians. Less than 20 percent of physicians speak Spanish; physicians who speak Middle Eastern or Asian languages are even less prevalent.

California is losing doctors at an alarming rate too. Thirty percent of our state’s doctors are over 60 years old and are nearing retirement. Twenty percent of all physicians devoted less than 20 hours a week to patient care.

The \$100 million appropriation included in the budget begins to address these statistics through support and expansion of primary care residency programs and by helping recruit providers to practice in medically underserved areas. The funding will be allocated over six years. Absent this funding, California primary care training programs would face nearly \$60 million in cuts due to the pending expiration of federal and private foundation grants this year.

“California is taking a bold first step to improve the health of local communities,” said Castellano-Garcia. “We hope that our partners in Washington D.C. will join us and do the same.”

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Horizon 2030: Meeting California’s Primary Care Workforce Needs

“Horizon 2030: Meeting California’s Primary Care Workforce Needs,” was commissioned by the California Primary Care Association and authored by respected health workforce researchers Jeff Oxendine, who is an Associate Dean for Public Health at the UC Berkley School of Public Health, and Kevin Barnett, a Senior Investigator at the Public Health Institute.

Horizon 2030 focused on five components: Career Awareness and Education, Residencies and Graduate Medical Education Funding, Primary Care Transformation and Financing Innovations, Recruitment and Retention and State and Regional Strategies and Infrastructure. The Executive Summary provides nine overarching priority recommendations, with more specific recommendations in each section.

You can read the Executive Summary [HERE](#) and the Full Report [HERE](#).

About the CaliforniaHealth+ Advocates

CaliforniaHealth+ Advocates is an independent advocacy organization affiliated with the California Primary Care Association. CaliforniaHealth+ Advocates is committed to advancing the mission of California’s community health centers, who provide care to one in seven Californians each year. Community health centers provide comprehensive, high quality health care to everyone who walks through their doors, in a compassionate and culturally sensitive manner.

Community health centers include federally qualified health centers (FQHC) and FQHC look-a-likes, community clinics, free clinics, rural health clinics, migrant health centers, Indian health service clinics, and family planning clinics.

Services include comprehensive primary and preventive care, women’s health, dental, mental health, substance use treatment, health education, outreach and enrollment, pharmacy and more.

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