August 6, 2012

Peter Lee, Director
California Health Benefit Exchange Board
2535 Capitol Oaks Drive, Suite 120
Sacramento, CA 95833

Re: Comments on Qualified Health Plan Policies and Strategies to Improve Care, Prevention and Affordability

Dear Mr. Lee and Members of the Board:

On behalf of Californians for Patient Care, I want to thank you for considering stakeholder comments on the *Qualified Health Plan Policies and Strategies to Improve Care, Prevention and Affordability.* As an independent patient-advocacy organization, Californians for Patient Care applauds the Exchange's mission to increase access to affordable healthcare for all Californians. We believe the Exchange will play an invaluable role in increasing access to affordable care and we welcome the opportunity to work with the Exchange in the realization of its goals.

As the California Health Benefits Exchange (CHBE) is built, care must be taken to ensure that access is actually enhanced, that patient choice is protected and consumers have a full understanding of the healthcare network into which they are buying. We recommend all qualified health plans offer broad networks to California's diverse consumers with full transparency, responsive customer service, affordability and quality care.

Californians for Patient Care believes that decisions of the CHBE should benefit all Californians, as is stated in the Exchange's vision. Creating equity among all Californians is a challenge but is essential for the long-term interests of the state and its residents.

We also believe a broad network of service providers, rather than a narrow network, gives Californians more choice as to how, where and from whom they receive their care. This element of choice may provide two benefits – patients becoming more accountable for their healthcare decisions and enhanced quality of care.

Californians for Patient Care recommends an inclusive definition of "essential community provider" be embraced by the CHBE so that providers which have been providing service to Medi-Cal patients and the uninsured would be able to continue to serve those patients. Doing so will increase continuity of care for many patients; increased continuity of care leads to better health outcomes.

Californians for Patient Care works every day with patients struggling to find affordable healthcare. We welcome the opportunity to share our patients' experiences with the California Health Benefit Exchange and look forward to being part of the collaborative development and implementation of healthcare reform in California.

Sincerely,

Carmella Gutierrez
President

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