

March 22, 2012

VIA ELECTRONIC AND HAND DELIVERY

Peter Lee, Executive Director
California Health Benefit Exchange
2535 Capitol Oaks Drive, Suite 120
Sacramento, CA 95833
peter.lee@hbex.ca.gov
916-263-4270

Dear Mr. Lee:

On behalf of our respective organizations, we would like to wholeheartedly welcome the Board Members of the California Health Benefit Exchange to Fresno, California. Our organizations represent individuals who will benefit greatly from the well thought out implementation of the Health Benefit Exchange, but who are often difficult to reach due to various barriers such as income, geographic isolation, lack of language services, and immigrant status. For that reason, we offer our local expertise in both knowing the demographics of Fresno and in actively working and engaging those groups that we work with on a daily basis – communities of color, Limited English Proficient (LEP) groups, immigrants, and other hard to reach populations that are often geographically isolated.

In regards to the aforementioned populations, we would like to quickly highlight some areas of continued concern for the individuals that we represent:

- **Navigator Program.** Given the diversity of the Central Valley and our state, we urge you to ensure that the navigator program has standards in place to ensure that the navigators, CAA's or promotoras are fluent in the language in which they are stating fluency. Simply because someone speaks a language does not mean they know the medical or medical terms needed to provide this service. Without this assurance, as many as 110,000 fewer Limited-English-Proficient (LEP) individuals will be enrolled in the Exchange.¹
- **Access to Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Care.** We would also like to ensure that those individuals we serve in Fresno will have access to medical professionals who provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services and who understand the health disparities that exist in our community. We urge the Exchange to ensure that health plans contract with Essential Community Providers including the local

¹ Please refer to a recent study titled "Achieving Equity by Building a Bridge from Eligible to Enrolled" by the California Pan-Ethnic Health Network, UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, and UC Berkeley Center for Labor Research and Education.

community clinics that are often at the forefront of providing health care services to the diverse communities we serve.

- **Health Disparities.** We thank you for incorporating the reduction of health disparities in your vision statement and encourage you to continue to be mindful of the health inequities that exist throughout California. In regards to disparities, we would like to bring to your attention “Land of Risk/Land of Opportunity,” a 2011 report by the Center for Regional Change (CRC) at UC Davis. The aforementioned report is important because of its content and because it is a project that involved significant collaboration between Central Valley organizations, community residents, and UC Davis researchers. With that in mind, we highly encourage you to utilize the knowledge of local groups regarding health disparities in the Central Valley as you move forward and to include appropriate measures such as data on race, ethnicity, and primary language as part of the metrics with which the Exchange can use to measure its success in reducing disparities.
- **Outreach and Enrollment.** As part of the effort to reach out to hard to reach populations and maximize their enrollment, we urge you to target resources for consumer assistance to organizations that serve those with the highest needs. Additionally, now that the Exchange is contracting with businesses that will help to develop a communication, marketing and outreach/Navigator strategy for the Exchange, we urge these new contractors to invite local groups from the Central Valley to participate in stakeholder meetings to gather their expertise on actively and successfully engaging hard to reach populations.
- **Focus Groups.** We would also recommend the coordination of focus groups, in multiple languages, to gather the input from the local communities as to how they would structure the outreach effort.
- **The California Health Benefit Exchange as a Brand.** We would also like to highlight the importance of the Health Benefit Exchange having a distinctive brand to prevent deceptive insurance marketing efforts. These efforts targets communities who are more vulnerable such as those with low education levels, geographic isolation, seniors, communities of color, Limited English Proficient populations, etc. Furthermore, in establishing a brand, it will be important to ensure that Exchange terminology is easily translatable across different languages and cultures.

We would also like to note that we, the undersigned Central Valley organizations, are not the only groups who have been actively working towards educating individuals about the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and the California Health Benefit Exchange. Thus, we highly encourage you to continue to reach-out to those who have lived in this region and who have deep roots and ties to the Central Valley.

In the meantime, we would like to sincerely thank you for listening to the request of grassroots organizations to facilitate the participation of groups who may not be able to

travel to Sacramento, for taking direct steps to ensure the active participation of local organizations in Fresno by arranging for the webcast of your monthly meeting, allowing participants to ask questions during meetings via the telephone, and for scheduling Board meetings in Fresno, the Bay Area, and Los Angeles.

Once again, welcome to Fresno, California. We look forward to working with you to ensure the maximum enrollment in the California Health Benefit Exchange.

Respectfully,





Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries, Inc. (FIRM, Inc.)



Madera Coalition for Community Justice



Fresno Metro Ministry (FMM)



Planned Parenthood Mar Monte



Central Valley Members of HOS



Resources for Independence Central Valley (RICV)



Health Access



San Joaquin Valley LEAP



Hmong Health Collaborative (HHC)



Southeast Asian Resource Action Center (SEARAC)