



DEPARTMENT	1501 Capitol Ave., Suite 71.6101	PHONE 916.440.7594	Roberta Lawson
OF HEALTH	P.O. Box 997413, MS 7003	FAX 916.440.7595	RDH, MPH
SERVICES	Sacramento, CA 95899-7413	rlawson1@dhs.ca.gov	<i>Executive Administrator</i>

June 11, 2007

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

The California Conference of Local Health Officers (CCLHO), which represents public health officers from the 61 local health departments in the state, applauds the inclusion of an obesity prevention component in your health care reform proposal. It is all too uncommon to see public health measures considered in debates over health care reform, even though they can prevent illness and death and significantly reduce health care costs over time. CCLHO holds great hope that the obesity prevention component will survive the negotiations over a final bill, and will mobilize its membership to contribute to that end.

While we realize there is a long political and financial road to travel before any health care reform package is complete, we ask you to consider some important details about the "community makeover" section of the obesity prevention component if we are fortunate enough for it to survive. As we understand it, grants would be awarded to community groups and local health departments throughout the state for projects that demonstrate strong potential for improving nutrition and physical activity.

CCLHO requests that you consider the legacy of tobacco, where California set the standard for the nation and the world in lowering rates of smoking and lung cancer. A pillar of that success was the establishment of local health departments as Local Lead Agencies (LLAs). LLAs, through consistent annual funding allocations, were able to develop effective local infrastructure and, through their close proximity to active community-based organizations, developed lasting partnerships that were a major factor in the successes related to tobacco. CCLHO believes this model would better serve the intent of your "community makeover" proposal, and provide a stronger and better orchestrated local presence to work in concert with State programs.

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Again, CCLHO thanks you for your vision and support for public health. As always, we are ready to work with you and your staff to improve the health of Californians, and would welcome an opportunity to further discuss the prevention components of health care reform with you or your staff.

Sincerely,

(Original signed by:)

Glennah Trochet, MD
President
CCLHO

Cc: Kim Belshé, Secretary
Health and Human Services
1600 Ninth Street, Room 460
Sacramento, CA 95814

Sandra Shewry, Director
CA Department of Health Services
1501 Capitol Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95814

Mark Horton, MD, MSPH
State Public Health Officer
CA Department of Health Services
1501 Capitol Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95814