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April 29, 2019

The Honorable Anthony Portantino
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
State Capitol, Room 2206
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SB 29 (Durazo) – Health4All Adults: Full-Scope Medi-Cal for Low-Income Undocumented Adults – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Portantino:

California Food Policy Advocates is pleased to support SB 29 (Durazo), which would provide comprehensive full-scope Medi-Cal to income-eligible undocumented adults by removing immigration status as an eligibility exclusion. Removing this unjust exclusion takes our state one step closer to universal health coverage and ensures that no Californian is barred from access to health care because of their immigration status. California is stronger when everyone has access to health care.

California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) is a statewide policy and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious, affordable food. Drawing on our core understanding that there are many social, political, and economic determinants of poverty, food insecurity, and poor health, CFPA employs a variety of advocacy strategies to fulfill our mission. Ensuring access to health care is one of those strategies. The current gap in coverage for immigrant Californians has negative consequences for health and economic security, which reduces their ability to buy nutritious foods and invest in preventative care.

Today, California provides near-universal coverage for children, thanks in large part to Health4All Kids, enacted in the 2015-16 state budget. In 2015, California removed immigration status as an eligibility barrier for Californian children to access full-scope Medi-Cal. The success of Health4All Kids has ensured that over 250,000 children have enrolled in life-saving, comprehensive health coverage.¹ However, their parents and other undocumented Californians continue to lack access to health care. This reality has tremendous health and economic impacts on families and our state, where nearly 1 in 6 of all California children have at least one undocumented parent.

¹ Lucia, Laurel. Towards Universal Health Coverage: Expanding Medi-Cal to Low-Income Undocumented Adults. Center for Labor Research and Education, University of California, Berkeley. February 2019. <http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/medi-cal-undocumented-adults>

Undocumented Californians are deeply rooted in our state and provide significant economic, familial, and cultural contributions to our communities. SB 29 addresses the financial costs to entire communities and the state due to the health care access exclusions for undocumented Californians. Undocumented Californians make up 1 in 10 workers across various sectors and industries.² Their inability to access routine and preventative treatment threatens economic disruption for immigrant households and productivity losses for our economy. Undocumented adults also face substantially high medical bills when they do seek care, leading to an increased risk of medical debt that disrupts their financial well-being and that of their families.³ SB 29 reduces these costs by improving health and economic outcomes. A recent study found that adults who, as children, became eligible for public health insurance paid more taxes and had higher wages.⁴ California's health care system is stronger and more cost-efficient when we detect and treat preventable conditions early. Ensuring that all Californians can count on routine and preventive medical care is vital to the well-being and long term sustainability of our state.

Despite their vital place in California's social and economic fabric, undocumented Californians are denied lifesaving care because of where they were born. The single largest population within California's remaining uninsured are undocumented adults who shape our state and who call California home.⁵ We can continue the success of California's efforts to get to universal coverage by becoming the first state in the nation to remove immigration status as a barrier to full-scope Medi-Cal for all income eligible undocumented adults.

We invest in the health of our state when we invest in health coverage for low-income undocumented adults. For these reasons California Food Policy Advocates urges you to support SB 29 (Durazo) to remove the immigration status eligibility exclusion to full-scope Medi-Cal for undocumented Californians.

Sincerely,



Gabrielle Tilley, Policy Advocate

Cc: Members of Senate Appropriations Committee
Senator Maria Elena Durazo

² American Immigration Council. (2017). Immigrants in California. Retrieved from <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-in-california>

³ Hu, L., Kaestner, R., Mazumder, B., Miller, S., & Wong, A. (2016). Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago. The Effect of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act Medicaid Expansions on Financial Wellbeing. Retrieved from https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2857533

⁴ Health Coverage and Care for Undocumented Immigrants. <http://www.ppic.org/publication/health-coverage-and-care-for-undocumented-immigrants/#fn-18>

⁵ Lucia, Laurel. Towards Universal Health Coverage: Expanding Medi-Cal to Low-Income Undocumented Adults. Center for Labor Research and Education, University of California, Berkeley. February 2019. <http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/medi-cal-undocumented-adults>