



**CMA: Health Care Reform Takes Important Steps to Cover Uninsured But Falls Short of Assuring Access to Doctors**

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Sacramento (3/20/10) –The California Medical Association, California’s largest and most influential doctor’s organization, today announced its support and opposition to different parts of the health care reform legislation before Congress.

“This legislation is a mixed bag. It includes important improvements to our health care system but falls short of actually improving access to doctors,” said Brennan Cassidy, M.D., President of CMA.

“Expanding coverage to more Californians, stopping insurance industry abuses, and increasing funding for primary care are much needed improvements. However, this legislation has serious flaws.”

CMA announced strong support for expanding health care coverage to California’s uninsured, increasing access to primary care physicians who are the foundation of our health care system. It will also end insurance company abuses by requiring plans to direct 85 percent of revenues to actual patient care and prohibiting them from denying coverage to patients who become sick, who have been sick in the past, or who have chronic conditions.

However, CMA expressed opposition and severe disappointment that the bill does little to improve overall access to doctors. Unfortunately, the bill builds health care reform on the broken foundations of Medicare and Medicaid, without adequate funding. CMA warns that these programs must be fixed if seniors, military families and the uninsured are to gain access to the care they need.

CMA announced strong opposition to the creation of an unaccountable, non-elected Medicare commission that is mandated to make arbitrary cuts that will force even more physicians out of the program and limit seniors’ treatment options. The bill also fails to repeal the Medicare payment formula that is slated to cut doctor reimbursements by 40 percent over the next several years.

CMA is also disappointed that the bill fails to increase Medi-Cal reimbursement rates for all physicians. California rates are the lowest in the nation and have driven many physicians away from the program because they lose money providing care. Half of current Medi-Cal patients cannot find a doctor. The 1.7 million new Medi-Cal patients will be forced into emergency room care unless physician participation is increased.

“Congress and the President should immediately address the access issues. Congress must fulfill the promise of universal access to care by making sure that everyone can actually find a doctor,” said Dr. Cassidy. “Strong physician-patient relationships are the foundation of good medical care.”

“CMA will be vigilant in its advocacy to improve this bill,” said Dr. Cassidy. “We will focus on reform that gives seniors and the less fortunate a doctor who can stand by them when illness or tragedy strikes.”

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