



Together for Better Health

August 10, 2021

Measure X Community Advisory Board
1025 Escobar Street, 4th Floor
Martinez, CA 94553

Attn: Lisa Driscoll, Committee Staff

Dear Members of the Measure X Community Advisory Board,

The Community Clinic Consortium of Contra Costa and Solano (the Consortium) and its member health centers in Contra Costa – La Clinica de La Raza and LifeLong Medical Care – respectfully ask that you strongly consider recommending Contra Costa CARES as a priority program. Since its inception in 2015, the Contra Costa CARES program has successfully provided a medical home for over 8,000 uninsured Contra Costa residents. During this time, nearly 36,000 visits have been made to the network of community health centers to provide vital primary care services. It was intentionally designed to address the lack of access to services for low-income undocumented individuals who do not qualify for any local, state, or federal health coverage programs. The opportunities presented by Measure X ensures that Contra Costa is well positioned to continue building on the success of the CARES program and continue providing vital health care services for some of our most vulnerable residents.

It is encouraging that California continues to move closer to achieving universal coverage through its recent expansion of Medi-Cal eligibility for undocumented individuals 50 and over. However, even after this expansion is implemented in May 2022, individuals between 26-49 years old will continue to rely on local coverage programs like CARES. While estimates of how many will remain uninsured in Contra Costa vary, now is the time to capitalize on the policy momentum generated by leaders in Sacramento and the voices of Contra Costa residents who approved Measure X, to thoughtfully build on the CARES program here in Contra Costa.

We have all witnessed how the pandemic has exacerbated the health and social inequities that many low-income individuals have endured for many years, particularly those who are undocumented. This injustice is particularly disheartening given the many contributions these individuals have made to our state and local economy. According to a 2017 report by New American Economy, undocumented immigrants contributed nearly \$67 million in local and state taxes, yet they continue to be excluded from any meaningful pandemic financial relief and are left to rely on support from the local safety net. Local health care coverage programs like CARES will help to alleviate some of the difficult financial choices that individuals must make when determining whether to visit a doctor when they feel sick, or pay their rent, or buy groceries for their families.



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It is reassuring to see Contra Costa County's commitment towards racial equity and its alignment with state-wide health care initiatives intended to improve population health outcomes for all individuals. We look forward to working closely with Contra Costa Health Services (CCHS) and other local leaders to jointly develop program enhancements to ensure those who remain uninsured in Contra Costa have access to a comprehensive array of health and wellness services.

We are hopeful that during this fiscal year we will work closely with CCHS leaders to plan for the next bold iteration of the CARES program. Our goal is to ensure that we establish a coordinated and comprehensive local health care delivery system that is focused on improving health outcomes for all individuals regardless of their immigration status.

Thank you for your time and commitment to this issue. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Respectfully,



Alvaro Fuentes
Executive Director