



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 8, 2010

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New Administration Offers Opportunities for Fresh Approach for Putting California Back on the Road to Economic Recovery

The HHS Network of California issued the following statement on the occasion of Governor-elect Jerry Brown's State Budget Forum in Sacramento.

December 8, 2010 – The election of Jerry Brown as Governor has opened up opportunities to resolve the state budget and put California back on the road to economic recovery. This effort on behalf of the future Brown administration to begin addressing California's budget needs is a positive step in the right direction; one that we hope will continue by addressing many of the structural obstacles that have plagued California for too long.

In the last five years, Californians have suffered billions in spending cuts to vital health and human services programs, none of which have resolved the state's endemic budget problems. Instead, these cuts have exacerbated the state's fiscal crisis while at the same magnifying the impacts on families already stricken by the worst economic recession in decades -- evidenced in Governor Schwarzenegger's recent special session proposal, released Monday, calling once again for steep cuts to health care and human services. Among the Governor's proposed cuts released Monday include eliminating CalWORKS; imposing severe limits to care and coverage for 7 million Californians, while raising the cost of care for Medi-Cal patients, scaling back cash grants for seniors and people with disabilities and others.

We can get California back on the road to recovery with a state budget that takes full advantage of the resources provided by our state's health care and human services infrastructure, including the ability to leverage billions in federal matching funds, create and maintain hundreds of thousands of public and private sectors jobs, stimulate local business activity and empower Californians from all walks of life to be productive members of society.

When examining spending options for the coming budget year, the California State Legislature and the Governor should subject all state expenditures to the same rigorous scrutiny in the forms of a "jobs test," one that would allow us as a state to prioritize and allocate resources to programs and areas with a proven track record of creating and maintaining jobs and increasing economic productivity and output.

The practice of implementing substantial spending cuts to essential services has thus far failed to produce the desired results of balancing the state budget. Even more, it has put us in a worse situation in the years to come. California's health and human services infrastructure is a vital asset that helps protect our families, our communities and our state from health emergencies and social problems before they occur. Maintaining a strong and sustained health and human services infrastructure helps Californians now, and also gives us something to build on when the economy improves.

Finally, California must prioritize state funding in a way that maximizes Federal investments. The past practice of imposing steep cuts to essential health care and social services, such as Medi-Cal, CalWORKS, In-Home Supportive Services and others, has cost the state billions in Federal matching dollars that could have been invested back into our economy to create jobs and provide vital assistance to families.

Experts from the Health and Human Services Network of California are available for commentary:

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HHS Network of California:

California Immigrant Policy Center, California Partnership, Health Access California, and Western Center on Law & Poverty.

For more information, please visit our website at www.hhsnetworkca.org.

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