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**Decreasing the Rate of Medi-Cal Discontinuances and Increasing the Rate of Enrollments to Provide Comprehensive Health Insurance to Immigrant, Homeless, and Low-Income Residents in Los Angeles County**

The federal Medicaid health insurance program (Medi-Cal in California) is essential to supporting the health and economic wellbeing of millions of recipients in Los Angeles County (County). Without health insurance, low-income individuals must either jeopardize their health by forgoing necessary medical treatment, spend large portions of limited incomes on medical bills, or incur medical debt. Forgoing treatment can exacerbate health issues, causing more significant and expensive medical problems in the future, while spending large portions of limited incomes on medical bills or incurring medical debt can be financially crippling. Studies have shown that medical expenses and debt are a significant economic burden to low-income families and a driver of homelessness, particularly in Black and Latino communities. Ensuring that eligible residents of the County are enrolled in Medi-Cal is essential to providing the insurance coverage necessary to protect their health and economic security.

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Pursuant to the termination of the Federal Public Health Emergency, beginning April 1, 2023, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) resumed Medi-Cal annual renewals, thereby “unwinding” the continuous coverage requirements put in place during the California COVID-19 State of Emergency and the Federal Public Health Emergency. In the County, this Medi-Cal renewal process is impacting nearly four million residents.

In light of the large number of residents being affected by the resumption of the Medi-Cal renewal process, the Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a motion on March 21, 2023, directing DPSS, in coordination with the Department of Health Services (DHS), to report back on plans to implement this process in a manner that collaborates with community partners and minimizes unnecessary disruption to health benefits and services.

On April 4, 2023, DPSS presented its report to the Board, detailing ongoing outreach efforts by the State of California (State) and by DPSS to inform Medi-Cal beneficiaries of the renewal process. The outreach efforts by DPSS included press releases; telephone and text messaging; posting information in district offices, the DPSS website, social media platforms, and County channels; and collaboration with Managed Care Plans (MCPs), Community-Based organizations (CBOs), and key stakeholders. DPSS reported that, as of July 13, 2023, out of the 179,990 required to complete a renewal, 34,093 (19%) were discontinued, which is the same rate as pre-pandemic numbers. Since beneficiaries have 90 days from the date of discontinuance to submit their renewal and, if found eligible, have their Medi-Cal restored, continued and expanded outreach efforts will be key to ensuring that Los Angeles County achieves an even lower

rate of discontinuance.

Our most vulnerable communities will likely continue to face significant challenges completing the renewal process, including not being aware of the need to submit renewal forms due to economic, language, or other barriers; having difficulty reviewing and completing the renewal packet; not having sufficient time to wait in highly impacted DPSS call-lines for assistance with completing the forms; or simply mistakenly misplacing or discarding the renewal packet.

The renewal process poses particularly significant challenges for people experiencing homelessness, including renewal packets being sent to an address where an individual no longer receives mail, experiencing difficulties accessing their DPSS-designated address due to transportation issues, and, ultimately, lack of awareness about the resumption of the renewal requirement to continue receiving benefits. Ensuring that these most in-need residents complete the renewal process is essential for protecting their health and economic stability.

While it is expected that there will be natural Medi-Cal discontinuances for individuals no longer eligible due to reasons like moving to another state or transitioning to Covered California health coverage, we must continue our efforts to help beneficiaries maintain their health coverage.

We must also increase Medi-Cal enrollments for eligible residents overall. Effective January 1, 2024, the State will expand full-scope Medi-Cal coverage to all income-eligible adults aged 26-49 regardless of immigration status. This follows two previous phases of Medi-Cal expansion to non-citizens. In response to California's expansion of full-scope Medi-Cal to individuals regardless of immigration status, with the most recent being for

individuals aged 50+, the Board of Supervisors instructed DPSS, the Office of Immigrant Affairs, the Department of Health Services, the Department of Public Health, and other relevant County departments to develop and implement a plan to enroll aged 50+ individuals newly eligible for Medi-Cal and to conduct outreach to immigrants educating them on the new full-scope Medi-Cal eligibility. Utilizing lessons learned from prior expansion rounds to effectively outreach to the 26-49 age group is essential for successful implementation of this phase of Medi-Cal expansion to non-citizens.

Enrollment in Medi-Cal ensures that our most vulnerable communities can take full control of their health and wellbeing by having greater access to care without incurring crippling amounts of medical debt. Decreasing the rate of Medi-Cal discontinuances and increasing the rate of Medi-Cal enrollments, particularly among the most vulnerable low-income, immigrant, and homeless populations, is paramount to protecting health and economic wellbeing.

**WE, THEREFORE, MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors:

- 1) Direct the Department of Public Social Services, in collaboration with the Department of Health Services and Housing for Health, the Department of Public Health, the Department of Mental Health, the Office of Immigrant Affairs, the Los Angeles Homeless Service Authority, and all other relevant County departments and agencies, to develop and implement a plan to:
  - a. Launch an increased comprehensive media and outreach campaign to educate the public and current Medi-Cal beneficiaries about the Medi-Cal renewal process, including the ability to submit the renewal packet during the 90 days after they have been discontinued; their ability to call DPSS for assistance in

completing renewal forms; and reminding residents that they should not be charged a fee when requesting assistance with completing the renewal documents. Activities shall utilize text message/call services, webinars, ethnic and hyperlocal media, social media, *promotoras*, community health workers, navigator programs, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and other appropriate sources that are effective to reach the intended audience.

- b. Ensure that the outreach campaign also focuses on people experiencing homelessness, people at risk of experiencing homelessness, or people who have formerly experienced homelessness, including through utilizing internal County directives to relevant case-workers to provide information to clients about Medi-Cal enrollment, mobile health clinics, and other field and street outreach.

2) Direct the Department of Public Social Services, in collaboration with the Department of Health Services, the Department of Public Health, the Department of Mental Health, the Office of Immigrant Affairs, the Los Angeles Homeless Service Authority, and all other relevant County departments and agencies, to develop and implement a plan to:

- a. Enroll eligible clients aged 26-49 regardless of immigration status in full-scope Medi-Cal without healthcare service disruption, through special enrollment events and other assistance, utilizing best practices from prior rounds of expansion; and
- b. Develop outreach materials and conduct outreach and education to

prospectively eligible residents aged 26-49 and their families regarding the new full-scope Medi-Cal eligibility and address their concerns about the Public Charge Rule. Activities shall utilize text message/call services, ethnic and hyperlocal media, social media, *promotoras*, community health workers, navigator programs, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and other appropriate sources that are effective to reach the intended audience.

- 3) Direct the Department of Public and Social Services to work with the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Public Health, and the Department of Health Services, to utilize community health workers and *promotoras* to incorporate Medi-Cal Renewal and enrollment efforts into materials and messaging for community engagement.
- 4) Direct the Department of Public and Social Services to ensure that the above directives are conducted in a linguistically, culturally, and immigration appropriate manner.
- 5) Direct the Department of Public and Social Services to explore the feasibility of automatically renewing homeless Medi-Cal beneficiaries, including any needed legislation to accomplish such automatic renewals.
- 6) Direct the Department of Public and Social Services to report back in writing in 90 days on the results of the above directives, including the number of projected immigrants aged 26-49 in the County that would be newly enrolled in Medi-Cal, the number and rate of Medi-Cal terminations, with a breakdown of reasons for disenrollment, including failure to complete the renewal process, and next steps to reach those who have not enrolled.

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