



To: Interested Parties  
From: Freedom2Care ([www.freedom2care.org](http://www.freedom2care.org))  
RE: **Healthcare Access in California**  
Date: June 9, 2009

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## **Healthcare Statistics in California**

There are 110<sup>i</sup> community health centers in California that receive federal funding. They serve over 2.8 million<sup>ii</sup> patients a year. Uninsured patients account for 19%<sup>iii</sup> of all patients served and 16%<sup>iv</sup> are on Medicaid. Under California's state insurance program for kids, Medi-Cal, 3.5 million children are covered.<sup>v</sup>

There are 432<sup>vi</sup> hospitals in the state of California, 69 of which are faith-based; including 54 Catholic, 13 Adventist and 2 others.<sup>vii</sup> Every year, they serve approximately 9,381,606 patients,<sup>viii</sup> almost 26% of whom are uninsured and over 30% are on Medicare.<sup>ix</sup>

Overall, there are less than 100,000 doctors,<sup>x</sup> 230,520 nurses, and other healthcare professionals in the state of California. They serve millions of residents of California -insured, uninsured and those on government-provided healthcare - providing everything from primary care to all types of specialty care.

## **Threats to Healthcare Access in California**

There are threats right now to healthcare access in the state of California. Not everyone who everyone who needs critical and preventative care may be able to get it.

- Current projections indicate a 200,000 physician shortage by 2025. According to the Department of Labor there are 800,000 practicing physicians in the US and 250,000 are over the age of 55. The supply of new physicians is not keeping pace with the growing population and aging baby boomer generation.
- Because of the massive budget problem in California, the governor is proposing to eliminate funding completely for Healthy Families, which would leave almost 1 million children in the state without health insurance. Since many of these families seek care in faith-based hospitals and clinics, these facilities could be almost immediately overwhelmed.
- President Barack Obama has proposed rescinding the federal "conscience clause", a rule that protects doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals who decline to perform medical procedures, like abortion, that are against their moral beliefs. Once the rule is



rescinded, these doctors could be forced to either perform abortions or lose their jobs. If they are forced to close their practices, where will the millions of patients they serve and the new influx of uninsured children go for healthcare?

## Conclusion

The looming rescission of the federal conscience protection rule coupled with cutting Healthy Families in California due to budget constraints could trigger a greater lack of access to health care which including potentially fewer faith-based hospitals and clinics and long waits to see primary care doctors. The current crisis could have a devastating effect on thousands of doctors and other healthcare professionals of faith, which would certainly affect the 910,000 children, and millions of Californians who are now uninsured and underinsured. The coupling of budget cuts and the removal of conscience protections could very well set the stage for the perfect storm of an even greater healthcare crisis in the state of California, even without the looming physician shortage.

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<sup>i</sup> National Association of Community Health Centers, (2008).

<http://www.nachc.com/client/documents/research/2008-State-Fact-Sheets/castatefactsheet08.pdf> ;  
[http://www.nachc.com/client/documents/chartbook\\_update\\_20091.pdf](http://www.nachc.com/client/documents/chartbook_update_20091.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> 2,314,271 plus 364, 273 Migrant/Farmworkers Patients and 185, 213 Homeless Patients National Association of Community Health Centers, (2008). <http://www.nachc.com/client/documents/research/2008-State-Fact-Sheets/castatefactsheet08.pdf>; [http://www.nachc.com/client/documents/chartbook\\_update\\_20091.pdf](http://www.nachc.com/client/documents/chartbook_update_20091.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> National Association of Community Health Centers, (2008)

<http://www.nachc.com/client/documents/research/2008-State-Fact-Sheets/castatefactsheet08.pdf>

<sup>iv</sup> National Association of Community Health Centers, (2008)

<http://www.nachc.com/client/documents/research/2008-State-Fact-Sheets/castatefactsheet08.pdf>;  
[http://www.nachc.com/client/documents/chartbook\\_update\\_20091.pdf](http://www.nachc.com/client/documents/chartbook_update_20091.pdf)

<sup>v</sup> Richard Vrantingham, Branch Chief for Policy Development Branch for Medi-Cal (June 5, 2009).

<sup>vi</sup> Kathleen Maestas, SSM for Rural Health Policy Council for the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development (June 8, 2009).

<sup>vii</sup> Richter, Richard, California Hospital Association, (June 8, 2009)

<sup>viii</sup> Op.cit.

<sup>ix</sup> Op. cit.

<sup>x</sup> California Medical Association, (Jan 2007) [http://www.cmanet.org/upload/doctors\\_in\\_ca.pdf](http://www.cmanet.org/upload/doctors_in_ca.pdf)