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COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

February 1, 2019

The Honorable Salud Carbajal
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Carbajal:

I am writing on behalf of the County of Santa Barbara to express support for legislation to remove the current limitations on Medicaid, Medicare, SSI, and CHIP benefits for persons in custody pending disposition of charges.

Representative Hastings has introduced H.R. 1345, the Restoring the Partnership for County Health Care Costs Act, which would remove the so-called “inmate exception” that prevents individuals from being eligible for Medicaid, Medicare, SSI, and CHIP benefits while they are in the County’s jail awaiting trial, even though they have not been convicted of a crime. The exception unfairly shifts the burden for the costs of otherwise-eligible inmates’ health care to the County and is contrary to the presumption of innocence in the American judicial system.

The U.S. Supreme Court's interpretation of the 8th Amendment requires all government entities to provide medical care to all inmates. In Santa Barbara, as in most counties, providing health care for inmates constitutes a major portion of the jail’s operating costs, placing substantial stress on scarce local resources. Please work to expedite action on H.R. 1345 or similar legislation that would remove the inmate exception and ensure that local governments are not burdened with an unfair share of meeting the mandate to guarantee medical coverage for inmates.

Sincerely yours,

Don Gilcrest
Washington Representative

DWG: awg