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The Honorable Lorena S. Gonzalez
Assembly Appropriations Committee, Chair
State Capitol Building, Room 2114
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 10 (Lara) SUPPORT – As proposed to be amended

Dear Assembly Member Gonzalez,

Public Citizen, a national patient advocacy and consumer organization with over 60,000 members and supporters in California and 400,000 nationwide, wishes to express support for Senate Bill 10 (SB 10). SB 10 will require the state to apply for a federal waiver that would allow undocumented immigrants and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients to buy coverage through the Covered California health insurance marketplace using their own money.

Current policy excludes undocumented immigrants and immigrants approved for deferred action through the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program of 2012, from purchasing their own health insurance through Covered California due to their immigration status.¹ This exclusion leaves immigrant workers, students, and family members without the ability to purchase comprehensive health insurance through the Covered California health insurance marketplace. According to the UC Berkeley Labor Center, 320,000 higher earning undocumented people are eligible to buy a Covered California participating health plan.²

SB 10, as proposed to be amended, would direct the state to apply for a waiver under Section 1332 of the Affordable Care Act to allow undocumented immigrants and DACA recipients with higher incomes to purchase a health plan through Covered California with their own money. Many undocumented immigrants and DACA recipients are part of mixed-status families that include family members who are U.S. citizens or lawfully present immigrants who are already eligible for financial assistance. By allowing everyone to access Covered California regardless of immigration status, families can view and compare health insurance options for all family members.

Through SB 10, California can be a model for the nation, removing the unjust exclusion to access health coverage based on one's immigration status. Undocumented workers make significant contributions to the California economy, paying more than \$3 billion a year in state and local taxes.³ These adults deserve access to Covered California health plans. Further, immigrant communities and our health systems are better off when we expand comprehensive coverage to all. With insurance, patients do not have to delay care until a condition becomes so unbearable that they end up in the emergency room. This form of care is

¹ In 2010 Congress passed the Affordable Care Act that excluded undocumented immigrants from participation in state Exchanges and the Medicaid expansion. Existing rules excluded the undocumented from Medi-Cal were maintained. In August of 2012, President Obama's administration established regulations preventing those approved for Deferred Action from access to exchanges under the Affordable Care Act.

² Pauline Bartolone, *Hello, White House, how about Obamacare for California's undocumented?*, CALMATTERS, (May 4, 2016), <http://bit.ly/1OlsmB7>.

³ Lisa Christensen, Gee Matthew, Gardner Meg Wiehe, *Undocumented Immigrants' State & Local Tax Contributions*, THE INSTITUTE OF TAXATION AND ECONOMIC POLICY, (February 2016), <http://bit.ly/1s1Kndm>.

both wasteful and expensive. Lastly, immigrant families across California will be better served when Covered California is accessible to the entire family because all family members can enroll in health coverage together and at the same time. Health insurance enrollment becomes a lot easier for families, especially those with mixed immigration status.

California has a chance to lead the country and address the sad fact that despite the passage of The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act millions of people remained uninsured, much of them undocumented. Without affordable health insurance the lives and well-being of many Californians are at risk. By directing the state to apply for the federal waiver, other states can also see a way to go further and provide financial support for all families to purchase health plans with state funds.

SB 10 is an important first step for reform in California, but it is not enough to ensure adequate health coverage for all Californian families. We must also expand state Medicaid or Medi-Cal eligibility to all adults regardless of their immigration status. Given rising out-of-pocket health care costs and high monthly insurance premiums, undocumented families may still face burdens to obtain care despite the passage of SB 10.

We encourage you to support SB 10 to protect thousands of undocumented adults, and then to work for further reforms. This legislation's passage will serve as a crucial initial step towards ensuring that more of California's undocumented have health insurance coverage.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Vijay Das
Health Care Policy Advocate
Public Citizen's Congress Watch