

# California State Senate

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SENATOR  
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June 21, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell:

As you and other members of the U.S. Senate are putting together your version of health care reform, I believe it is imperative that the bill is publicly heard before the appropriate policy committees. Health care for Americans deserves a full vetting, absolute transparency, and input from a diversity of opinions. It is unimaginable that the U.S. Senate would move forward on such a significant health care proposal that has not been heard publicly, let alone received any feedback, analysis or testimony from doctors, nurses, patients or caregivers.

California has a health care system that has covered more people than any other state in the country, and it is unconscionable that you are not taking into account our story and successes. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) is thriving in California because we are determined to make it work. There has been continued bipartisan collaboration between various groups, including the public, policy stakeholders, and the State Legislature.

As chair of the Senate Health Committee in California and a practicing optometrist, I've had the honor to work on implementing the ACA policies and the Medicaid expansion in this state. These landmark pieces of health care policy have changed the lives of millions in California. Our state has experienced the largest percentage point decline in the uninsured rate of any state – a drop from 17.2 percent in 2013 to 7.1 percent in 2016.

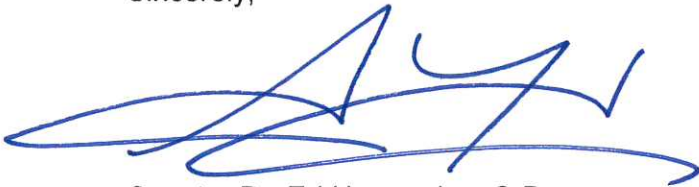
In addition, millions of vulnerable Californians have the health care they need through Medicaid. About one-third of California's population, or more than 13 million children and adults, receive health care through Medi-Cal, with nearly 3.7 million covered through the ACA's Medicaid eligibility expansion. Our low income seniors, children and disabled now have health care. However, there's a deep worry that is growing within those very same people because of what's taking place in Washington, D.C.

California has seen real successes by wholeheartedly embracing a policy that was written in a transparent and bipartisan manner. During the debate over the ACA, even you acknowledged that health care shouldn't be made "in the dark." I've held countless hearings throughout the years on the ACA and the future of our healthcare system. I've met with stakeholders on both sides of the aisle. I've traveled the state from our northern border to our southern border hearing directly from constituents. The stakes could not be higher.

I am prepared to share California's story with the U.S. Senate on a moment's notice. For the sake of the millions of Americans whose health care is in the balance, I implore you to listen to the various voices of those of us who have not only worked to expand health care on the ground level, but also in their own communities.

I look forward to your response and the opportunity to address the U.S. Senate on behalf of Californians. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact my office at 916-651-4022.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ed Hernandez", with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

Senator Dr. Ed Hernandez, O.D.  
California State Senate  
Chair, Senate Health Committee  
Senate District 22

CC:  
Democratic Leader Senator Charles E. Schumer  
Senator Kamala D. Harris  
Senator Dianne Feinstein  
Speaker of the House Rep. Paul D. Ryan  
Majority Leader Rep. Kevin McCarthy  
Democratic Leader Rep. Nancy Pelosi