

CAPITOL OFFICE
STATE CAPITOL, ROOM 5108
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814
TEL (916) 651-4022
FAX (916) 327-8817

California State Senate

SENATOR
KEVIN DE LEÓN
CHAIR

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
TWENTY-SECOND SENATE DISTRICT



COMMITTEES
APPROPRIATIONS
ENERGY, UTILITIES &
COMMUNICATIONS
GOVERNMENTAL
ORGANIZATION
HEALTH
PUBLIC SAFETY

JOINT COMMITTEE
LEGISLATIVE BUDGET

DISTRICT OFFICE
1808 W. SUNSET BLVD.
LOS ANGELES, CA 90026
TEL (213) 483-9300
FAX (213) 483-9305

October 3, 2013

RE: Integration of Health and Human Services Benefit Applications & Reports

Dear Supporter,

Last year, your organization supported my bill, Senate Bill 970, that would have required the California Health Eligibility, Enrollment and Retention System (CalHEERS) to establish a streamlined, single point of access for low-income Californians seeking health benefits to learn about and apply for other state and federal assistance for which they might be eligible. Governor Brown vetoed SB 970, but with a promise that the Administration would pursue this integration of public benefits in their implementation of CalHEERS.

I was proud that SB 970 raised awareness about this issue in the state Legislature and beyond, and I have been diligently monitoring the administration's commitment to establishing an integrated system. I know that many community stakeholders have too, so you may already be aware of the information I'm including. I am grateful for all of the work that organizations like yours do to make basic needs benefits available to all eligible individuals, especially in the context of healthcare expansion. There is still a great deal to do to ensure that the promise of healthcare reform is made available to everyone within our borders; but in the meantime, I hope you will take a moment to celebrate these achievements and learn about the next steps to integrate health benefit eligibility and enrollment functions with those for other public benefits that serve the same Californians.

As you know, Covered California, our state's new marketplace for private healthcare insurance, goes live in just one week. As required by the Affordable Care Act (ACA), this new marketplace will utilize a single application, web-based and paper, to connect Californians to private health care and public health subsidies or programs for which they are eligible. To improve the integration of this single health application with federal nutrition assistance, the Budget Act of 2013 with the addition of Welfare and Institutions Code Section 14005.66 which requires the state to seek the federal waivers necessary to use the eligibility information of individuals who have been determined eligible for CalFresh to determine their eligibility for Medi-Cal. This provision takes an important first step towards the vision for streamlining applications and reports that were embraced by SB 970, and that will help low-income Californians stay healthy and live with dignity.

Additionally, the Budget Act of Fiscal Year 2013-14 included funding for a Deputy Director of Horizontal Integration at the Department of Social Services (DSS). This position has been filled and additional staff hired to improve coordination and integration between DSS the Department of Health Care Services, and Covered California.

I understand that the state CalHEERS online portal has been designed with "Learn More About" links to websites where people can connect to the program and apply online. Additionally a "Refer To" checkbox for healthcare applicants wishing to be referred to the CalFresh and/or CalWORKs programs has been worked into the single state health care paper application which will be released later this week. Though these are not as robust as the linkages that were envisioned by SB 970, I congratulate advocates and administrators alike for getting us this far and I am assured that they are as much as can be achieved now within the timelines necessary to implement the Affordable Care Act insurance coverage mandates; I am committed to supporting efforts to pursue a more robust linkage in the future.

Finally, I wanted to share with you a couple of new resources that have been developed by some of your colleagues that I am sure will continue to drive the conversation in the coming months and years. They are:

<http://www.thenextgeneration.org/publications/obamacare-opportunity>

<http://cafoodbanks.org/docs/ATC/consumer'schecklist.pdf>

These reports highlight the need for continued and timely action on horizontal integration in California.

I hope you find this update informational and encourage you to contact my staff if you have any questions on this topic. Questions can be directed to Claire Conlon on my staff at (916) 651-4022 or Claire.Conlon@sen.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



Senator Kevin de León

CC:

Secretary Diana Dooley, Health and Human Services Agency
Director Will Lightbourne, Department of Social Services
Director Toby Douglas, Department of Health Care Services
Director Peter Lee, Cover California
Director Frank Mecca, County Welfare Directors Association of California