

## **Our Kids Can't Wait - Meaningful Healthcare Reform Must Include Covering All Kids This Year** *It's Good for Kids, Good for our Economy, and Good for the Health of Our State*

United Ways of California is part of a broad-based coalition of business, employee, healthcare and children's advocates that believe that any meaningful healthcare reform in 2007 must include establishing a statewide, sustainable system that ensures EVERY California child has health insurance.

Covering all kids is a goal we can, and should, accomplish THIS YEAR because it has widespread support among the public and business leaders. United Way understands that business is the engine of California's economy and covering all kids can only happen if business leaders are part of an equitable solution that blends public and private sector involvement. We have learned that business leaders consider health care a priority and understand covering all kids is not just the right thing to do, but it's also good for business and our economy. Here's why **health coverage for all children** makes sense for California and its businesses:

### **Covering all kids is a goal within reach, and a goal widely supported by voters and business leaders**

- Over 90% of California's 10 million children are insured. Of the remaining 763,000, over half qualify for existing public programs like Healthy Families and Medi-Cal. It would cost relatively little to finish the job. Estimated at approximately \$330 million annually that would be required to provide comprehensive health coverage to all California's kids.
- A November 2006 United Way poll found that 81% of Californians support covering all kids. Voters think it should be a shared responsibility and that employers should be provided with voluntary ways to participate. Parents should share in cost.

### **Covering kids is fiscally responsible and will help reduce overall healthcare costs**

- We're already paying the cost of children's healthcare, but in a more costly manner. Those kids without coverage often receive care in more costly emergency rooms and are hospitalized more frequently – costs that are borne by taxpayers and consumers of health insurance like employers.
- Further, every dollar spent on childhood immunizations saves \$13 in future health care costs.

### **Covering kids reduces costs to business by promoting better health and worker productivity**

- Ensuring access to preventive care could save employers billions of dollars by lowering parents' absenteeism and loss of productivity. Nationally, absenteeism costs employers between \$2 and \$12 billion each year.

### **Covering kids will provide tremendous economic benefits**

- Federal matching funds are available for approximately 58% of California's uninsured children. By enrolling children in public insurance, California could gain billions of federal dollars. The state is eligible for \$1 to \$2 from the federal government for every dollar we invest in children's health insurance.
- These funds would flow into local economies, creating a multiplier effect and generating new jobs and new revenues.

### **Business leaders can be part of the solution through public / private partnerships**

- Encouraging a public/private partnership would bring together funding from a variety of sources – federal, state, and families. United Way, like many business leaders, understands that employers have a role to play – they already insure over 52% of California children – but they shouldn't be viewed as the only funding source to cover uninsured children.