



San Francisco Community Clinic Consortium

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October 10, 2004

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Mayor – City and County of San Francisco
1 Dr. Carlton Goodlett Place, Room 200
San Francisco, CA 94012-4689

RE: The San Francisco Community Clinic Consortium Urges You to Support a “YES” Vote on Proposition 67

Dear Mayor Newsom:

The San Francisco Community Clinic Consortium – representing 10 community health centers serving 67,000 low-income and uninsured San Franciscans per year – urges you to publicly endorse **Proposition 67 – the “Save Emergency Care. Save Lives” initiative** on the November 2 ballot.

Emergency services are a basic health need for San Franciscans and the financial viability and stability of these services have never been more threatened than they are right now. The Legislature should be taking the lead in resolving this crisis but, unfortunately, they are not addressing it. Our present health care system cannot wait for the Legislature to decide if it can afford to fund emergency services. Access to hospital trauma and emergency medical services in California is in critical condition. In San Francisco, patients often wait for hours in overcrowded San Francisco General Hospital or community hospital emergency rooms for treatment. Critically ill and injured patients are being sent from one hospital to another because emergency rooms are full. In the last decade, over 60 hospital emergency rooms and trauma centers have closed.

Inadequate funding of emergency medical services has had a ripple effect throughout the continuum of care. Under state and federal law, any person seeking emergency medical care must be provided such care regardless of their ability to pay. As a result, hundreds of millions of dollars of uncompensated care is provided by doctors, hospitals and clinics each year. Emergency room doctors and on-call specialists are unable to provide the growing amounts of uncompensated emergency care without affecting the quality of such care. Community clinics have become burdened with the overflow from emergency room departments and the requirement to provide critical follow-up care. Moreover, over-crowding in clinics tends to increase over-crowding in emergency departments.

In addition, firefighters and paramedics are the first on the scene to provide medical care to accident and disaster victims; the medical care they provide can literally mean the difference between life and death. They must be appropriately trained and equipped to respond to medical emergencies.

Prop 67 would provide desperately needed funding to keep emergency services and clinics open to provide care when it is most needed. It would also support 911 infrastructure development plus training and equipment for emergency response personnel. Funding would be achieved by increasing the existing 9-1-1 surcharge from 0.72 percent to 3.72 percent. The surcharge would only apply to intrastate telephone service and would not increase the cost of long-distance telephone calls made outside California. Moreover, the initiative places a cap on the amount that a telephone company can charge a residential telephone user for the new surcharge of 50 cents per month. That is just \$6 per year for residential telephone users, and most residential users won't pay that much. Users of "lifeline telephone services" including Seniors are exempt from paying the new surcharge.

The 9-1-1- emergency telephone system serves as a life-line to emergency services for San Franciscans each year. It's essential that the system of emergency care it is linked to be adequately funded to respond rapidly and efficiently to emergencies when we need it. We urge you to publicly endorse and support "YES" on Prop. 67. The lives of San Franciscans could depend on it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John Gressman".

John Gressman
President/CEO

cc: Members, Board of Supervisors
Members, San Francisco Health Commission
Dr. Mitch Katz (Director of Health)
Barbara Garcia (Deputy Director of Health)