January 9, 2017

The Honorable Reginald Jones-Sawyer, Co-Chair
The Honorable Mark Stone, Co-Chair
Assembly Special Committee on the Office of the Attorney General
California State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814
Via Email to: Cindy Morante, cindy.morante@asm.ca.gov

SUPPORT: Nomination of Xavier Becerra
for California Attorney General

Dear Assemblymembers Jones-Sawyer and Stone:

Health Access California, the statewide consumer advocacy coalition working for quality, affordable healthcare for all Californians, strongly supports Governor Brown’s nomination of U.S. Congressman Xavier Becerra for California Attorney General.

Health Access has worked with Rep. Becerra for many years to expand health coverage and improve the health system upon which we all rely. Rep. Becerra played a leadership role in securing the passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), which California has robustly implemented and improved upon. As a result, California has reduced its uninsured rate by more than half, more than any other state. Nearly 5 million Californians have gained coverage under the ACA, and an additional 5.8 million Californians with pre-existing conditions are protected from discrimination by insurance companies simply because they are sick. Rep. Becerra has also used political acumen and policy expertise to help California secure a Medicaid waiver to improve our safety net. We can think of no better person than Rep. Becerra to protect the financial and consumer protections millions of Californians now enjoy.

The Attorney General has significant responsibilities that affect consumers’ ability to access quality, affordable healthcare. They include:

- Defending state consumer protection laws against legal challenges. Last year, the Legislature passed and the Governor signed into law AB 72, which provides the nation’s strongest consumer protections from surprise medical bills. This measure, co-sponsored by Health Access and the California Labor Federation, passed with strong bipartisan support. An out-of-state organization has initiated legal action to block implementation of AB 72, and the next Attorney General will need to defend this landmark law. AB 72 is one in a long string of California laws that improved on the Affordable Care Act, and builds upon a longer history of state consumer protections that date back to the Knox-Keene Act of 1975.

- Oversight over sales and mergers involving nonprofit healthcare facilities such as hospitals and nursing homes: The Attorney General must protect the charitable mission of these nonprofit facilities and ensure their assets that are held in public trust. This includes ensuring continued operation of emergency rooms and other essential services, requiring
charity care to be maintained, and taking other actions that ensure transactions do not have adverse affects on the communities served by the facility.

- **Enforce antitrust laws** to protect competition and prevent anticompetitive conduct in the healthcare industry. Strong antitrust enforcement benefits consumers because it helps contain costs, improve quality, expand choice, and encourage innovation. The Attorney General must be vigilant in protecting consumers from the negative effects of market consolidation amongst insurers and providers such as hospitals and accountable care organizations, as well as hold pharmaceutical companies accountable for engaging in price gouging.

Rep. Becerra’s strong track record fighting for consumers give us the utmost confidence that he will work to ensure all Californians have access to quality, affordable healthcare. For these reasons, we respectfully request the California State Assembly to confirm the nomination of Rep. Xavier Becerra to serve as Attorney General of the State of California.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Anthony Wright
Executive Director

[Signature]

Tam M. Ma
Legal and Policy Director

CC: Members, Special Committee on the Office of the Attorney General
The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Governor, State of California
The Honorable Anthony Rendon, Speaker, California State Assembly
The Honorable Kevin de León, President Pro Tempore, California State Senate
The Honorable Xavier Becerra, U.S. House of Representatives