January 9, 2017

The Honorable Reginald Jones-Sawyer, Co-Chair
Assembly Special Committee on the Office of the Attorney General
State Capitol, Room 4126
Sacramento, CA 94815

The Honorable Mark Stone, Co-Chair
Assembly Special Committee on the Office of the Attorney General
State Capitol, Room 3146
Sacramento, CA 94815

RE: Appointment of Congressman Xavier Becerra for California State Attorney General
(STRONG SUPPORT)

Dear Assemblymembers Jones-Sawyer and Stone:

On behalf of SEIU California and our 700,000 members statewide, we are proud to support Governor Brown’s appointment of Congressman Xavier Becerra to become California’s next state Attorney General.

During Congressman Becerra’s 24 years in Congress, he has stood up for Californians as a staunch defender of workers’ rights to organize, civil rights, immigrants and access for all to quality, affordable health care through the defense of safety net federal programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. As the Assembly Special Committee on the Office of the Attorney General noted in announcing your hearing to consider the Governor’s appointment, the next four year term will require a strong defense of California’s values and our laws. In addition to the areas laid out by the Committee, SEIU is also concerned about significant proposed changes affecting worker and healthcare consumer protections.

The Attorney General is critical in defending the rights of workers and labor organizations in California and has, in the past, been instrumental in providing opinions and legal insight on statutes and case law affecting the interests of working people. In addition to the appointment of an anti-union and worker Supreme Court justice who is expected to eliminate fair share fees in the public sector, we anticipate president-elect Trump and Congressional Republicans to pursue an agenda to eviscerate many protections and rights for workers in the private sector and the unions who represent them. Now more than ever we need a thoughtful Attorney General who will fairly review and defend laws to ensure the core underpinnings of worker rights and the labor movement are upheld. In Congress, Representative Becerra voted numerous times to increase the federal minimum wage and to protect workers’ rights to organize.

Representative Becerra’s tenure in Congress also demonstrated his willing to fight to protect coverage, access, and affordability in healthcare for those who need it the most. His Congressional District 34 saw the largest drop in uninsurance in the nation thanks to the ACA. In addition, he fought for access to more affordable prescription drugs through price transparency and better negotiating power through public programs while in Congress.
Under proposals put forward by incoming President Trump and Congressional Republicans to repeal the ACA and open the sale of health insurance across state lines, an estimated 6 million low-income Californians would lose their Medi-Cal or Covered California coverage, and millions more would be pushed out of coverage as they unravel healthcare consumer reforms which today prevent insurers from denying people coverage when they need it the most.

Allowing insurers to sell across state lines would not only undermine California’s strong consumer reforms, it would accelerate massive health industry consolidation. For decades, the California Attorney General has also played an important role in overseeing the transfer or sale of nonprofit hospitals and nursing homes, which employ thousands of SEIU members and provide vitally needed healthcare to California’s communities throughout the state. Most California hospitals today are incorporated as nonprofits which are subjected to the Attorney General’s scrutiny on the community impact of these transactions, as well as any charitable obligation that must be upheld in exchange for these hospitals’ tax exempt status. Hospital consolidation is a concern as it can lead to higher prices for healthcare services with reduced access. Our state needs a strong champion in our Attorney General, willing to put the interests of patients and communities ahead of market competition.

On immigration issues, which are central to our California values, Congressman Becerra was at the forefront of attempts to craft bipartisan immigration reform and co-sponsored legislation to provide unaccompanied minors with legal representation in deportation hearings. Under the incoming Trump Administration, we will need to defend not only those immigrants living, working, and paying taxes in our state, but those whose lives and communities will be impacted through their plans to build a wall along our state’s Southern Border, impacting our entire state’s economy and our environment.

After serving over two decades in Congress, Representative Becerra knows well the types of federal policies that will threaten our state’s values for equality, inclusiveness and justice. We strongly support the confirmation of Congressman Becerra as a proven leader ready to fight for our state as our next Attorney General.

Sincerely,

Alma Hernandez
Executive Director