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HEALTH CARE REFORM AHEAD OF ITS TIME: MEASURE A REPORT DETAILS HOW SALES TAX HELPS MAINTAIN AND EXPAND ALAMEDA COUNTY HEALTH CARE SERVICES

San Leandro, CA – While federal health care reform continues to make front-page news, Alameda County voters initiated a reform of their own when they approved, almost 10 years ago, a tax designed to ensure the provision of a basic level of health care services across all segments of the population.

The latest report about “Measure A” health care spending in Alameda County, covering fiscal year 10/11, describes how over 100 County health care service providers used Measure A sales tax funds to enhance services, expand outreach, and upgrade facilities.

Measure A, the Essential Health Care Services Initiative approved by voters in March 2004, raised the County sales tax by one-half cent to support emergency medical, hospital inpatient, outpatient, public health, mental health, and substance abuse services for indigent, low-income, and uninsured County residents. This “half-cent on the dollar” has made a big difference: Measure A generated \$105,513,482 in FY 10/11, distributing funds to well over 100 health care service providers and ultimately serving over half a million Alameda County residents.

Measure A also created a Citizen Oversight Committee that monitors Measure A spending for each fiscal year. In December 2012, the committee published its fifth report, covering Measure A spending for FY 10/11. Highlights from the report include the following:

- Despite the down economy, Measure A enabled a large number of providers to continue existing programs and maintain the service levels offered by these programs.
- Measure A funds increased access to health care services for organizations ranging from the Alameda County Medical Center to school health centers, while decreasing wait times for these services.
- Several recipients, including Children’s Hospital and St. Rose Hospital Silva Clinic, school health centers, the Juvenile Justice Center Victims of Crime Unit, and the Alameda Health Consortium, used Measure A funds as leverage to draw down matching funds, including both federal and foundation grants.
- Many organizations and departments, including the Public Health Department, Multicultural Institute, Preventive Care Pathways, and Horizons Family Counseling, used Measure A funds to increase health outreach and education efforts, focusing on prevention. Measure A also allowed many providers to continue and expand mental health services.
- Measure A gives the County flexibility to address unmet needs and unanticipated costs. Specifically, the County Board of Supervisors receives a discretionary \$784,088 allocation that gives the Supervisors the flexibility to respond to unanticipated needs in their districts.
- From Axis Community Health sites in Livermore and Pleasanton, to the Fremont-based Tri-City Health Center and the Newark Health Center, to multiple agencies in Berkeley, Measure A funding touched all areas of the County, thus delivering on its promise to help ensure basic health care for all County residents.



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Louis Chicoine, chair of the Oversight Committee, offered this thought: "While the federal health care reform effort has the potential to expand health care coverage nationwide, we in Alameda County can take pride in the fact that for many years we have contributed toward making sure health care is available to all members of our community. Measure A continues to enable a large number of health care providers serving low-income and uninsured patients to maintain and even expand the service levels they offer."

The full report contains comprehensive information, such as a complete list of all providers receiving Measure A funds in FY 10/11; the amounts received by each provider; descriptions of the services offered by Measure A recipients; maps showing the geographic distribution of Measure A fund recipients, indicating the spread of services throughout all parts of Alameda County; and more.

To request a free copy of the report, or for information on becoming a member of the Measure A Oversight Committee, please call (510) 618-2016 or email James.Nguyen@acgov.org. You can also download a free copy of the report at www.acgov.org/health/indigent/measureA.htm.

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In addition to providing details about providers receiving funds and the services they offer, the Measure A report contains real-life stories of individuals whose health and well-being have been greatly impacted by services enabled through Measure A. Here is just one example, from Measure A recipient the Multicultural Institute (MI):

Nelson is a skilled carpenter who seeks work on the street between freelance jobs. At a diabetes screening day offered by program partner West Berkeley Family Practice at an MI day laborer weekly lunch, Nelson's diabetes was detected. Nelson started diabetes management classes and treatment including insulin. However, after a series of complications in his life, Nelson simply disappeared. His phone didn't work. A concerned clinic case manager turned the query over to MI. MI helped locate a working phone number for Nelson and he returned for care. Though his lack of medication for several months was life-threatening, his reconnection to care occurred in time.

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