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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ALAMEDA COUNTY OFFICIALS RESPOND TO GOVERNOR'S BUDGET PLAN

Alameda County leaders say they support the fiscally prudent approach exhibited in Governor Brown's latest State budget proposal, but say it should do more to boost safety net services slashed during the recession and address concerns about access to care for the expanding population of residents enrolling in the State's Medi-Cal program.

Supervisor Keith Carson, who chairs Alameda County's Budget Workgroup, said the \$164.7 billion budget proposal released by the Governor last week reflects an improving financial situation across the State, and thus contrasts positively with the difficult years of the recent past when deep cuts to programs serving the poor were a fixture of every State spending plan.

Carson said there is much to admire about Governor Brown's careful approach – which includes paying down debts and contributing to a Rainy Day fund to prepare for future economic dips – but that the opportunity must not be missed to spread the benefits of the improved economy to struggling residents who were impacted most by the deep cuts of the recession years. Alameda County still experiences a high rate of poverty.

"I firmly believe that more needs to be done to address the needs of our neediest residents – working families, students, children, the disabled and elderly – who bore the brunt of the devastating cuts enacted in years past," he said.

Despite the Governor's pledge that local governments will be paid a portion of prior claims for unreimbursed mandates, County officials say the Governor's budget plan raises troubling questions about the government funded Medi-Cal program that provides vital health care services to low-income residents. The proposal does not set aside funds to serve undocumented immigrants, leaving local providers exposed to substantial increased costs.

Furthermore, the Governor's plan leaves unaddressed continued reductions in reimbursement rates paid to primary care physicians serving Medi-Cal patients. Experts say these reductions are causing many primary care providers to scale back or eliminate service altogether to Medi-Cal patients, resulting in very restricted access to care for the ranks of recipients whose numbers are expanding rapidly under federal health reform.

While the spending proposal calls for increases to primary and secondary education, County officials say the plan does not appear to act on promises to fully fund pre-school programs for low-income children.

Scott Haggerty, President of the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, said additionally he would like the budget plan to address two local priorities – improving the crumbling infrastructure of roads and bridges and spurring greater use of renewable energy. "We invite the Governor to take this opportunity to partner with local leadership to develop real solutions to local problems," Haggerty said.

Added County Administrator Susan Muranishi, "We look forward to the following months when the Legislature and Governor continue to review and develop a final State budget. Alameda County will be closely following that process and we will continue to educate State leadership about our budget priorities."