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A Primary Care Information Resource For NACHC Members

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CALIFORNIA DIRECTOR TESTIFIES BEFORE CONGRESSIONAL FIELD HEARING

Mike Sullivan, Executive Director of Merced Family Health Centers, Inc., recently testified before a field hearing of the House Committee on the Budget, Task Force on Human Resources. Chaired by Barbara Boxer of California, the Modesto, California hearing was titled "Health Care Crisis -- Problems of Cost and Access." In addition to Congresswoman Boxer, the hearing was attended by Congressman Gary Condit of California and Congressman Mike Espy of Mississippi.

Sullivan was one of eleven speakers which included California Assemblyman Sal Cannella, Modesto Mayor Carol Whiteside, Scenic Hospital CEO Beverly Finley, and Medical Society President, John C. Pfeffer, M.D.

Sullivan's testimony centered around three key issues:

1. That we put in place soon a National Health Plan, its financing

weighted towards prevention and primary care, and assuring equal access to all US residents.

2. That rural America's (and the San Joaquin Valley's) special health care needs be fully integrated into the agenda of a National Health Plan. Specifically, rural Americans must achieve equal access to physician resources, especially primary care MDs. A National Physician Service or obligation will have to be incorporated into a National Health Plan.

3. And finally, that there be continued and increased grant financing to fill in the gaps of care needed by a growing underserved and uninsured population of high risk special people including the urban poor, the homeless, migrant farm workers, the rural poor.

Medi-Cal, poor pregnant women, the children of our poor, and refugees from Southeast Asia.

Following a description of services offered by his clinic system, Sullivan called on the Committee to remember to focus on where the uninsured and underinsured will go for health services, not just on who will pay for such care.

"I happen to think that Community Health Centers can and should serve as a perfect model for such a system," Sullivan said as he ended his testimony.

Following testimony, Sullivan answered questions from Condit and Espy regarding the effectiveness of the National Health Service Corps. Boxer said she liked the idea of "Community Health Centers" where people could go to receive complete services.