



**COUNTY OF
SAN BERNARDINO**

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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February 25, 2009

The Honorable Felipe Fuentes
California State Assembly
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: **AB 334 (Fuentes)** - As Introduced 2/18/09 - **SUPPORT**

Dear Assemblyman Fuentes:

The San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors is pleased to support AB 334. (Fuentes). AB 334 requires the state Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) to suspend, rather than discontinue, an inmate's Medi-Cal benefits.

As you know, State law provides that Medi-Cal benefits generally cannot be paid for incarcerated individuals except when the inmate is a patient in a medical institution. DHCS has interpreted this law to mean that Medi-Cal benefits should be discontinued when an individual is incarcerated. However, federal law does not require states to terminate inmates' eligibility. Under federal law, inmates may remain enrolled in Medicaid even though services received while in jail are not covered. Indeed, the federal Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services is urging the states to not terminate Medicaid for incarcerated individuals.

The current policy of Medi-Cal termination requires a time-consuming reapplication process that leaves many without needed prescriptions, mental health services, and medical treatment. The resulting lack of access to medical care is especially acute problem for those individuals with mental health or substance abuse problems exiting county detention facilities who are in need of psychotropic medication or other medical care necessary to treat severe mental health and/or substance abuse conditions. For these reasons, the San Bernardino County Sheriff also supports AB 334. The San Bernardino County Sheriff recognizes that any delays in securing treatment can have devastating effects, and may contribute to the individual being quickly reincarcerated in county detention facilities.

For these reasons, the Board of Supervisors of San Bernardino County joins with the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department in support of AB 334. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Lance Larson, the County's Director of Legislative Affairs at (909) 387-4821. The Board thanks you for your attention in this matter.

Sincerely,

GARY C. OVITT
Chairman, Board of Supervisors

cc: Members, San Bernardino County Legislative Delegation

The mission of the government of the County of San Bernardino is to satisfy its customers by providing service that promotes the health, safety, well being, and quality of life of its residents according to the County Charter, general laws, and the will of the people it serves.