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## House of Representatives

### CELEBRATING THE EXPANSION OF THE DESERT HEALTHCARE DISTRICT

HON. RAUL RUIZ, M.D.  
OF CALIFORNIA

MR. SPEAKER, I RISE TO CELEBRATE A VERY SPECIAL AND PERSONALLY MEANINGFUL VICTORY FOR RESIDENTS IN THE COACHELLA VALLEY IN MY DISTRICT.

I RISE TO CELEBRATE THE PASSAGE OF MEASURE BB AND THE EXPANSION OF THE DESERT HEALTHCARE DISTRICT.

WHEN I WAS A YOUNG BOY, GROWING UP IN A FARM WORKER TRAILER PARK IN COACHELLA, I SAW THE DIGNITY OF GOOD, HUMBLE PEOPLE WHO LOVED GOD, WORKED HARD, AND STRUGGLED TO MAKE A BETTER LIFE FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR CHILDREN.

I ALSO SAW THEIR NEEDLESS PAIN AND SUFFERING DUE TO THEIR POVERTY AND LACK OF HEALTHCARE RESOURCES.

I VOWED AT THE AGE OF FOUR TO BECOME A DOCTOR AND SERVE THEM.

AS A FRESHMAN PRE-MED STUDENT AT UCLA, I STAYED AWAKE AT NIGHT ON THE TOP BUNK-BED OF MY TINY DORM ROOM, THINKING ABOUT THE DIFFERENCE I WOULD ONE DAY MAKE.

AFTER GRADUATING FROM HARVARD'S MEDICAL, GOVERNMENT, AND PUBLIC HEALTH SCHOOLS, I RETURNED HOME AS AN EMERGENCY MEDICINE PHYSICIAN AS PROMISED.

I ROLLED UP MY SLEEVES, ORGANIZED, AND WENT TO TRAILER PARKS, RURAL COMMUNITY PARKS, AND THE POOREST COMMUNITIES TO HELP.

I SAW FAMILIAR FACES WITH FAMILIAR STORIES OF SUFFERING, STILL LIVING IN POVERTY AND RESOURCE-POOR COMMUNITIES.

THAT'S WHY I FOUNDED THE COACHELLA VALLEY HEALTH INITIATIVE IN 2010, ALONG WITH MY WIFE MONICA AND FRIEND CHAUNCEY VEATCH, TO ADDRESS OUR LOCAL HEALTHCARE ACCESS CRISIS.

WE PRODUCED A REPORT AND A STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT PLAN.

OUR MOST IMPORTANT SOLUTION WAS THE EXPANSION OF A HEALTH CARE DISTRICT.

AND TODAY, I'M VERY HAPPY TO CELEBRATE THE PASSAGE OF MEASURE BB, AND THE EXPANSION OF THE DESERT HEALTH CARE DISTRICT, TO COVER ALL MEDICALLY UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES IN THE VALLEY.

IT'S SIGNIFICANT BECAUSE THE DISTRICT HAS AN ANNUAL MULTIMILLION DOLLAR BUDGET THAT FUNDS HEALTHCARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAMS THAT IMPROVE THE PUBLIC'S HEALTH.

THAT MEANS MORE PROVIDERS CARING FOR MORE PATIENTS, AND PROVIDING SERVICES LIKE PEDIATRIC SPECIALTY CARE, MENTAL HEALTH, VETERANS' HEALTH, SENIOR SERVICES, AND PROVIDER PIPELINE PROGRAMS.

IT'S PROOF THAT GOOD THINGS HAPPEN WHEN GOOD PEOPLE COME TOGETHER TO DO GOOD WORK.

I'D LIKE TO THANK CALIFORNIA ASSEMBLYMAN EDUARDO GARCIA FOR ANSWERING

THE CALL AND STEPPING UP TO BE A CHAMPION FOR THE EXPANSION OF THE DISTRICT.

HE GOT THE BILL TO PUT EXPANSION ON THE BALLOT PASSED INTO LAW, AND TOGETHER, WE HELPED BUILD LOCAL SUPPORT BY PUTTING OUT FIRES AND PERSUADING OTHERS OF THE BIG IDEA.

I ALSO WANT TO THANK COUNTY SUPERVISOR MANUEL PEREZ.

WHEN THE EXPANSION OF THE HEALTH CARE DISTRICT WAS UNDER THREAT, SUPERVISOR PEREZ AND I WORKED CLOSELY TO CONVINCING OTHER COUNTY SUPERVISORS HOW MUCH OUR COMMUNITIES WOULD GAIN IN BOTH IMPROVED HEALTH OUTCOMES AND INCREASED ECONOMIC ACTIVITY.

THE RIVERSIDE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS VOTED UNANIMOUSLY IN FAVOR OF THE EXPANSION.

THERE WERE MANY OTHER CHAMPIONS WHO PULLED THEIR WEIGHT AND GOT THE JOB DONE.

THANK YOU TO THE LEADERSHIP OF THE DESERT HEALTHCARE DISTRICT ITSELF, INCLUDING THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, DR. LES ZENDLE, PREVIOUS CEOs KATHY GRECO AND HERB SCHULTZ, AND INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER CHRIS CHRISTENSEN.

THANK YOU TO BOARD MEMBERS DR. JENNIFER WORTHAM, KAY HAZEN, AND CAROLE ROGERS, WHO VOTED IN FAVOR OF EXPANSION, AND THE MANY OTHER STAFF MEMBERS WHO HAVE HELPED ENSURE THIS ADVOCACY RAN SMOOTHLY.

SEVERAL KEY HEALTHCARE ORGANIZATIONS WERE INSTRUMENTAL IN THIS SUCCESS.

AS THE LARGEST PROVIDER FOR THE EAST VALLEY, TENET HEALTHCARE HAS BEEN ENORMOUSLY SUPPORTIVE BY PRIORITIZING THE HEALTH OF THEIR PATIENTS ABOVE ALL ELSE.

THANK YOU TO BORREGO COMMUNITY HEALTH FOUNDATION FOR YOUR GENEROSITY AND LEADERSHIP TO HELP CREATE THIS VICTORY.

THANK YOU TO PLANNED PARENTHOOD FOR YOUR TIRELESS WORK, AND THANK YOU TO BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES, CLINICAS DE SALUD DEL PUEBLO, AND EISENHOWER MEDICAL CENTER.

THANK YOU TO JAMES WILLIAMSON, WHO LED THE CAMPAIGN.

THANK YOU TO BARBARA FIELDS, JUAN ARMENTA, MARY ENGLISH, WALTER CLARK, OSCAR ARMIGO, MARY LLOYD, RICHARD MEYER, AND JACK MARCO, WHOSE GENEROSITY NEVER WAVED THROUGHOUT THIS JOURNEY.

AND THANK YOU TO THE VOTERS WHO APPROVED THE EXPANSION MEASURE BY AN INCREDIBLY LARGE MARGIN.

THANK YOU FOR HELPING TO MAKE THE DREAM I HAD AS A BOY FROM A FARM-WORKER TRAILER PARK A REALITY.

TOGETHER, WE ARE IMPROVING LIVES AND MAKING A DIFFERENCE.